Trial of Belarusian Nobel Prize Winner Ales Bialiatski Opens in Minsk

By [AFP](#)

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Sergei GAPON / AFP

Jailed Belarusian Nobel Peace Prize winner Ales Bialiatski went on trial in Minsk on Thursday in what supporters see as a bid to clamp down on Belarus's highest-profile human rights organization, Vesna, which he founded.

Bialiatski, who shared last year's Nobel Peace Prize with two other human rights organizations from Russia and Ukraine for his work defending human rights in authoritarian Belarus, founded Vesna in 1996.

Vesna [tweeted](#)photographs of Bialiatski alongside his co-defendants Valentin Stefanovich and Vladimir Labkovich in the defendants' cage at the start of the hearing.

Bialiatski and his associates were jailed after large-scale demonstrations against the regime in 2020, following authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko's claim to have won

elections deemed fraudulent by the international community.

With the help of Russian leader Vladimir Putin, Lukashenko cracked down on the opposition movement, jailing his critics or forcing them into exile.

The Vesna trial is the first in a series of high-profile court cases due to begin in Belarus over the coming weeks, including those of several independent journalists and that of Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, the leader of the opposition movement who now lives in exile.

According to Viasna, there were 1,448 political prisoners in Belarus as of Dec. 31.

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