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Volha Khvasevich

Louder than Words: Art Activism in the Context of Belarusian Protest Movement

CES, The Master's Programme in Human Rights and
Democratisation in the Caucasus

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LOUDER THAN WORDS: ART ACTIVISM IN THE CONTEXT
OF BELARUSIAN PROTEST MOVEMENT

FOREWORD

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This publication includes the thesis *Louder than Words: Art Activism in the Context of Belarusian Protest Movement* written by Volha Khvasevich and supervised by Nina Pirumyan, Yerevan State University.

BIOGRAPHY

Volha got a bachelor's degree in Economics from Belarus State Economic University in 2012 and a master's degree in Human Rights and Democratization from Yerevan State University in 2022. Her academic interests include interdisciplinary approaches to art, education, and human rights. In her free time, she is involved in activism, youth work and non-formal education programs.

ABSTRACT

‘Louder than words: Art activism in the context of the Belarusian protest movement’

‘Громче чем слова: арт активизм в контексте протестного движения в Беларуси’

‘Բառերից առավել» արվեստ - ակտիվիզմ բելառուսական բողոք ակցիաֆայի համատեքստում’

The world's reality of massive information, visual content and unexpected obstacles demands constant ongoing development of human rights-related tools and instruments as well as an interdisciplinary approach. Connecting artistic expression and activism creates a more understandable and effective language for speaking about sociopolitical processes and human rights than the official language of institutions worldwide. In the context of the protest movements in Belarus art activism became an instrument that influences the functioning and development of sociopolitical processes. The study aims to explore the phenomena of art activism in order to define the contribution of art activism to the sphere of human rights and democratic processes in the context of Belarusian protests. Using the methods of qualitative analysis of literature sources, evidence of art practices during protests and seven interviews with experts, artists and activists, the study defines art activism and its interconnection with human rights and also covers strengths and threats within the legal framework. On the basis of the study the main mechanisms of the impact of artistic expression on the democratic processes are defined. The current reality in the world reveals that artistic expression has a huge potential as an instrument in the sphere of human rights. The conceptualisation of current art activism experience and its contribution to the growth of the human rights dimension in Belarus in the context of the autocratic regime's protest movement generates significant methodological support for the application of artistic means.

TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
HRC	Human Rights Committee
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Convention	Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions
UN	United Nations
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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INTRODUCTION

*‘Art changes people,
people change the world.’*

John Butler

Although art and art activism are not the first to be associated with human rights, however, nowadays in the 21st century it is a powerful method of adaptation of the human rights sphere to the world’s reality of generations raised on visual content, clip thinking and participatory culture. Art activism and artistic expression becomes a closer and more understandable language for speaking about human rights than the official language of human rights institutions worldwide. At the same time, activism, human rights and sociopolitical processes fill art with an impact and strength to correspond to the challenges of contemporary society.

Referring to the context of Belarus the topic becomes even more relevant due to the role the artistic way of expression plays in social and political life as well as in responding to repressions and human rights violations. The phenomenal role of art activism and artistic expression in Belarus is also ensured due to repression from the side of the government and impossibility of direct expression of political or civic opinions. Therefore, the socio-political context of Belarus makes art activism a relevant and powerful method of expressing ideas of human rights and its protection. Moreover, the context of Belarus creates an interesting field of research covering the impact of art and activism in the frames of an autocratic regime.

The topic of art activism and its interconnection with human rights and social movements has been raised by different institutions, scholars, activists and researchers.

The United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights' Annual Report in 2018 highlighted the value of art and artistic expression and its bearing on the achievement and comprehension of the human rights sphere.¹ Additional attention to art, culture and its interconnection with human rights and sociopolitical life was covered in a UN Special Rapporteur's Research report on artistic freedom of expression² and a report from UNESCO.³

Stephen Duncombe and Steve Lambert in the scope of practically based research admit the connection of art activism with emotional motivation and strategic planning which together creates a strong foundation for social changes.⁴ Additionally, they go into detail on the key opportunities that art activism presents for social movements, including the impact that art activism has on a broad audience.⁵

With a focus on the opportunities and problems that complementing acts in the fields of art and law disclose, the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights and Allianz Kulturstiftung investigated transformation through the arts and law. Additional focus is made on the variety of forms and means of expression of human rights discourse through art works.⁶

Exploring the role of art in the modern social movement and human rights dimension, three main categories of protest art can be distinguished such as art produced for demonstrations, campaign art created and

¹ United Nations General Assembly, 'Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General' UN Doc A/HRC/37/3 (26 January 2018) <<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1474804?ln=en>> accessed 1 March 2022.

² United Nations General Assembly, 'Research report on artistic freedom of expression. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the freedom of opinion and expression' UN Doc A/HRC/44/49/Add.2* (24 July 2020) <<https://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?OpenAgent&DS=A/HRC/44/49/Add.2&Lang=E>> accessed 20 June 2022.

³ UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) <<https://en.unesco.org/creativity/convention/texts>> accessed 18 July 2022 (Convention on Diversity of Cultural Expressions).

⁴ Stephen Duncombe and Steve Lambert, 'Why artistic activism?' (*The Center for Artistic Activism*, 9 April 2018) <<https://c4aa.org/2018/04/why-artistic-activism>> accessed 1 March 2022.

⁵ Stephen Duncombe and Steve Lambert, *The Art of Activism: Your All-Purpose Guide to Making the Impossible Possible* (O/R Books 2021) <<https://artofactivismbook.com/#about>> accessed 3 March 2022.

⁶ European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights and Allianz Kulturstiftung, 'Artists and lawyers in dialogue' (European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights, 2021) <www.ecchr.eu/en/case/arts-human-rights-ecchr-explore> accessed 9 March 2022.

artworks created by protest artists.⁷ However, the main limitation of this classification is the overlapping influence of each of the categories on others, which also reflects the major issue of interconnection in the sphere of art activism.

The context of Belarus in the frames of art activism as a response to human rights violations has been researched by Belarussian scholars and interdisciplinary researchers. Tania Arcimovich investigated art activism as a means of addressing the violence from the government and other human rights violations that surfaced after the 2020 presidential elections in Belarus.⁸ Olia Sosnovskaya analysed the art as a tool of protest movements in Belarus. Her findings were also supported by the research of Antonina Stebur who explored the phenomenon of Belarussian protest art, naming the main tendencies in it.⁹ However, no fundamental research of the intersection of human rights and art activism in Belarus has been made, either from a historical perspective or from the perspective of modern social movements.

The importance of the study reveals both scientific and practical values. Despite the very solid global theoretical foundation of art activism and its connection to the human rights component, Belarus' particular autocratic constraints and the lack of a theoretical foundation that is country-specific present a unique topic for study. Therefore, conceptualising contemporary experiences of artistic activism and their contribution to the growth of the human rights component in Belarus in the context of the protest movement against an autocratic regime constitutes the study's scientific value. From the perspective of practical values, representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society, human rights education organisations and experts are the primary beneficiaries of the study. The research creates the base of knowledge and conceptualised art experience in the context of Belarus protest movements, which can be strong methodological help for

⁷ Grace Fussell, 'Designing for Change: The Role of Protest Art in Social Movements' (*Shutterstock*, 6 June 2020) <www.shutterstock.com/blog/designing-for-change-protest-art-now> accessed 12 June 2022.

⁸ Tania Arcimovich, 'When Language Fails: In the Margins of a Diary' (*Tranzit.at*, 30 June 2021) <<http://at.tranzit.org/en/news/0/2021-06-30/when-language-fails-in-the-margins-of-a-diary>> accessed 12 March 2022.

⁹ Marina Israilova, 'Искусство протестов/Протестное искусство в Беларуси [Art of protest/Protest art in Belarus].', (*Krapiva*, 21 December 2020) <<https://syg.ma/@marina-israilova/iskusstvo-protiesta-sliesh-protiestnoie-iskusstvo-v-bielarusi>> accessed 10 March 2022.

implementation of art-based methods in the work of NGOs as well as in educational projects and programmes in the sphere of human rights. Moreover, this study can create a methodological support for artists aiming to raise topics of human rights and connected socially important topics.

The aim of the research is to define the contribution of art activism and art practices to the sphere of human rights and democratic processes in the context of protest movements in the autocratic regime of Belarus.

In order to reach the aim the following objectives of the study are established: 1) define concept and interconnections between art, human rights and activism; 2) analyse the legal framework of art activism and artistic expression and 3) analyse and conceptualise the art activism practices and artistic expression in the context of protest movements in Belarus.

The study is concentrated on the issue of Belarusian protest movements as a response to human rights violations in the authoritarian regime mainly due to the phenomenal power art activism showed in Belarus and its contribution to fighting for democracy and human rights. Moreover, additional interest on the topic was caused by the lack of research, conceptualisation and theoretical grounds of this phenomena in Belarus.

The methodology of the research, which relies on qualitative analysis, is based on a thorough evaluation of the literature sources, evidence of art-activist forms and practices, and interviews with experts, activists and artists. Qualitative methods are used with the aim to provide an analysis of art actions and practices in the context of the protest movements after the 2020 presidential elections in Belarus. Alongside analysis, conceptualisation is made in the form of classification of art and art-activism practices. The main focus of the classification will be made on the way of influence and contribution to the human rights field and democratic processes.

The main obstacle of the study is foreseen in the lack or hidden nature of documented evidence of art actions and practices especially due to security reasons and danger of reprisals from the government. This obstacle is connected firstly to the practices which involve open participation of artists or community. Moreover, as the repressions of those expressing their opinion in 2020-2022 are getting stronger in Belarus, there is a tendency to erase existing evidence of past art-activist practices in order to provide security for artists and activists.

Additionally, the interconnected nature of art activism and different aspects of human rights dimension can be a limitation for simple and unambiguous classification and conceptualised analysis of art-activist practices.

The study is composed of the following sections:

- Abstract, which gives a concise overview of the current study and also covers its aim, objectives and results.
- Introduction, which contains background information on the research topic, discusses its relevance and significance, outlines its goals and objectives, highlights its scientific and practical value, and provides a summary of the master thesis's main sections.
- Main body, which contains three chapters:
 1. Chapter One investigates intersections between art, human right and activism, covering the definition of the concept, context and commonalities.
 2. Chapter Two is an analysis of international, regional and national legal framework covering issues of art, artistic expression and relevant human rights.
 3. Chapter Three represents the position and impact of art activism as well as any form of artistic expression in context of the protest movements in Belarus.
- Conclusions, which cover the main points of findings of the research.
- References, which gives the full alphabetical list of the sources that was used in the paper.

1.

INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN ART, HUMAN RIGHTS AND
ACTIVISM

Modern society and the specificity of life in the 21st century in the conditions of fast changes, globalisation, cross-border integration, social networks and speed of spreading information create new challenges and new perceptions of different concepts. In such circumstances the bigger meaning and greater potential are detected in an interdisciplinary approach as an instrument for social problem-solving and positive social changes. Following the interdisciplinary discourse this chapter will cover the intersections between art, human rights and activism. The main focus is targeted to the definition of the concept and exploration of the nature of art activism as a result of intersections between art and human rights.

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO ART ACTIVISM: DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPT

In order to research the concept of art and its connection with activism and sociopolitical context of the communities, the main definitions and clear understanding of the concept should be provided.

The first controversial point in defining art activism lies in the dimension of debates on what is considered as art and what cannot be considered as art. To look at the question of definition of art from philosophical discourse, the problem of definition used to raise a lot of debates among philosophers, art researchers and historians. Throughout the history of debates on the issue, a number of philosophers such as Kant, Weitz, Derrida, Elton and others often expressed the opinion

that art is indefinable, stressing the objectivity of this concept.¹⁰ Moreover, there was an idea that the concept of art does not even need any definitions. However, followers of the contrary opinion seek for objectivity in researching the concept of art and its definition which also leads to classification and categorising.¹¹ Following the tendency of an objective approach, traditional attempts to define art had been done, emphasising aesthetic or historical recognition as quite obvious and objective criteria for belonging to art.¹² Even more controversy started in the beginning of the 20th century with a revolution in visual art, when art was not identified as copying of visual appearance with different means anymore.

American critic Artur C Danto argues the statement of indefinability of art, claiming existence of universal criteria that can define an artwork. According to Danto, works of art are defined by the following features: meaning, embodiment and interpretation by viewer.¹³ With this approach Danto set institutional direction in defining art. This direction was followed by George Dickie, who emphasised the importance of the artist as a creator of the art as well as the importance of belonging to the system of artworld.¹⁴ This point of view on defining art had the intention to deny connection to any type of properties as a part of definition of art. Being known as a conventionalist approach, it is especially relevant in the context of changes that occurred in the artistic sphere starting from the 20th century.

Taking into consideration the controversy of the question, various approaches on defining art as well as specificity of timeframe and research area of this thesis statement, the following basic understanding of art is settled. Art is considered as an open concept. When something is made by a human with the goal to be art or an artistic way of expression, it is regarded to be an artistic practice or object.

¹⁰ Emanuel Paparella, 'Art as Indefinable and Deconstructable: Weitz and Derrida' (*The OVI*, 5 December 2008) <www.ovimagazine.com/art/3798> accessed 11 May 2022.

¹¹ George P Stein, 'On the Definition of Art: Two Views: On Its Indefinability' (1974) 8(2) *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 102, 102 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/3332139>> accessed 11 May 2022.

¹² Thomas Adajian, 'The Definition of Art' (*The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2022) <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/art-definition/>> accessed 12 July 2022.

¹³ Arthur C Danto, *What Art Is* (Yale UP 2013) 1.

¹⁴ George Dickie, *The Art Circle* (Haven 1984).

New creative and artistic forms as well as new goals and challenges emerged with the development of society. Art just for the art's sake couldn't answer social challenges and be relevant to the development of society. Therefore, in the middle of the 1970s and reflecting the processes of that time, art activism was born as a mixed practice on the edge of art and sociopolitical processes.

Reflecting complex and interdisciplinary concepts on the edge of art, human rights and sociopolitical processes, art activism doesn't have a universal definition. However, a lot of scholars, researchers, artists and art practitioners marked the boundaries of such a phenomenon. Nina Felshin, American curator, art historian and activist, who has analysed art activism since the middle of the 1970s, defines art activism as 'the innovative use of public space to address issues of sociopolitical and cultural significance, and to encourage community or public participation as a means of effecting social change'.¹⁵

Defining art activism and its specificity, Peter De Bolla, historian and art researcher, paid attention on the importance of experiencing the artworks, not just viewing from an aesthetic point.¹⁶ This idea was followed by practitioners and art activists, among them Pavel Mitenko,¹⁷ art activist, and Tania Bruguera,¹⁸ artist and political activist, who emphasised the specificity of art activism that it is more focused on actions, not simple representation of things or objects.

Stephen Duncombe and Steve Lambert in the scope of practically based research define art activism as 'a dynamic practice combining the creative power of the arts to move us emotionally with the strategic planning of activism necessary to bring about social change'.¹⁹

To sum up it can be said that art activism lays on the crossroads of art, social movements and political context having the aim of reacting to social and/or political issues as well as on power structures existing in the society. Moreover, developing together with the situation in the

¹⁵ Nina Felshin, *But Is It Art?: The Spirit of Art as Activism* (Bay Press 1995).

¹⁶ Peter De Bolla, *Art Matters* (Harvard UP 2003).

¹⁷ Pavel Mitenko, 'Мы создавали не шоу, а мастерскую [We created not a show, but a workshop]' (*Colta*, December 2013) <www.colta.ru/articles/art/1432-my-sozdavali-ne-shou-a-masterskuyu> accessed 27 May 2022.

¹⁸ Stefanie Graf, 'The Political Art of Tania Bruguera' (*The Collector*, 14 June 2022) <www.thecollector.com/tania-bruguera-art/> accessed 7 July 2022.

¹⁹ Stephen Duncombe and Steve Lambert, 'Why artistic activism?' (*The Center for Artistic Activism*, 9 April 2018) <<https://c4aa.org/2018/04/why-artistic-activism>> accessed 1 March 2022.

world, art activism creates a lot of sub-branches and directions on the edge of art and activism such as: participatory art, experimental art, art intervention, collaborative art, socially engaged art, political performance, protest art and others. All together it is included in the scope of research object under the notion of art activism.

Following the logic of the definition of the concept and its developments, in the scope of this research art activism and art-activist practices will be considered in the widest sense as artistic practices that are influencing on or aiming to transform social and political reality both directly or indirectly. The main idea of art activism is the intention to make changes.

1.2 ART AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR ACTIVISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Although it is impossible to have formal comprehensive criteria to assess the development of human rights in action, it can be observed that the situation with regard to the provision of human rights has a tendency to improve with the help of international, regional and national mechanisms as well as with the help of civil society and education. Nevertheless, challenges of the contemporary world, wars, hatred, climate change and lack of trust in institutions, creates a lot of new threats to human rights, which creates negative self-perception of dignity as a core principle of human rights concept. Therefore, there is a constant need in promoting, advocating, ensuring and fighting for human rights.

In order to deal with existing challenges and stay true to the issues of the contemporary world, the sphere of human rights should practice, experiment and appropriate new tools and methods. Such an approach based on interdisciplinarity serves to create a new language for effective communication for promoting human rights as well as for social and political changes.

Youth, residents of rural areas, those with low levels of social and political engagement, and the most vulnerable segments of society frequently cannot be reached by the language used by officials, representatives of international and European institutions, state officials and other competent professionals in the field of human rights. The same challenge can be relevant for civil society activists and NGOs. Even though this level has more contact with society and attempts to

use practical mechanisms, often it is hard to outreach the population beyond those who are socially and politically engaged. The effective response to the challenge concentrated in effective communication.

Communication is a strong instrument of social and political changes. However, it is important to take into consideration that social and political changes are not linear processes and include uncertainty and long-term effects and perspectives. Society and social and political constraints are complex comprehensive structures, characterised by interconnections between individuals, institutions, ecosystems and various actors. Therefore, simple delivering of information as well as linear communication strategies cannot neither succeed as a mean of communication nor reflect on complexity of the processes. At the same time, communication as a comprehensive mechanism covering human interactions and relationship plays crucial role in the processes of social changes.²⁰ Moreover, social changes are possible when the behaviour is changing. Being a complex system itself, behaviour transforms in a long-term perspective as a result of interconnections and intersections.

Communication strategies dealing with common values, human rights and other socially important topics should, first of all, reach the audience and be accepted by the audience. After this objective is reached the message should create a resonance in order to influence behaviour and start change. Both objectives can be reached if the message is properly constructed and represented.

The recent report covering the communication strategies on the socially important topics emphasise the importance of alternative strategies and models in communication. Among the successful components of communication strategy for social changes the importance of storytelling is mentioned. Stories have a big influence which can be additionally strengthened with simplicity, elements of drama and visualisation. Additionally, taking into consideration that there are 32 centres for visual information in the human brain, the

²⁰ Virginia Lacayo, Rafael Obregon and Arvind Singhal, 'Approaching social change as a complex problem in a world that treats it as a complicated one: the case of puntos de encuentro, Nicaragua' (2008) 16(2) *Investigación y Desarrollo* <www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0121-32612008000200001> accessed 31 August 2022.

means of visual communication can ensure reaching the objectives of both outreach and resonance.²¹

This is a point where intersection with art and artistic expression can create huge potential. Different forms of art and artistic expression represent a complex of tools, methods and techniques for providing meaningful and effective communication.

Another important characteristic of art and different forms of artistic expression is the ability to cause and influence humans' emotions. Transmitting messages with facts or information will never get the same outreach and resonance. The best method to explain anything is not to merely claim or inform about it in an obvious way; but rather, find a way to help the audience understand the message on a deeper level than just informative or factual. Only then the audience will be driven to change features of the behaviour or take action.²²

Moreover, art and artistic expression can not only cause emotion, but also help to cope and deal with human emotions and strong feelings. This aspect of art can be used as one of the instruments in the sphere of activism and human rights. The scars and traumas left by human rights violations and injustices can be treated with art. Art often is perceived as the way to promote mental health, which also explains the widespread use of art therapy programmes. It is stated that various aspects of mental health and well-being, such as self-perception, the ability to build healthy relationships and state of mind in general, are affected by art. Negative emotions and stress may be lessened by using art and artistic expression. More than that, practicing art or expressing thoughts in an artistic way can greatly improve positive mood and indicators of mental health and well-being.²³

An additional aspect where art can contribute is the realisation of freedom of expression. One of the key aspects of the freedom of

²¹ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'How to better communicate common values, fundamental rights and freedoms' (Report of high-level expert meeting. Vienna, 31 May – 1 June 2017) <https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2017-communicating-rights-expert-meeting-report-en.pdf> accessed 7 August 2022.

²² Emily Wilcox, 'An Investigation of the Intersection between Art and Activism' (Mahurin Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects, 2009) 29 <https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses/275/> accessed 31 August 2022.

²³ Girija Kaimal, 'How Art Can Heal' (July-August 2020) 108(4) *The American Scientist* 228 <www.americanscientist.org/article/how-art-can-heal> accessed 7 August 2022.

expression is the ability to protest against injustice and human rights violations, which frequently takes the form of objecting to violations of human rights. Protest and actions of resistance historically included the use of art and different forms of artistic expression. Art and artistic expression have accompanied and complemented the majority of significant protest movements and actions including the Dada anti-war movement, the reaction of AIDS pandemic, the Black Lives Matter, feminism movements and many others.²⁴ This is another way to use art as a motivation and support instrument for people in order to advocate for human rights, to object human rights violations or to express disagreement with social injustice.

Moreover, using artistic tools can reassess the perception of the activism and practices of advocacy for human rights. Activism and the human rights sphere are often connected with violation, injustice and difficulties. It leads to the scope of prejudices and stereotypes. Very often activism is perceived as a fight. Such a perception and reputation in society can reject the interest of quite a big layer of the population. Using artistic tools and artistic expression can reverse the perception of activism and advocacy for human rights. Art and artistic practices can put the focus on what values people stand for, instead of fighting for values or human rights. Even though it cannot be the only method in the sphere of activism, nevertheless, positive perception, artistic expression and creative content can attract new audiences to the sphere of civil activism and protection of human rights.²⁵

At the same time critique of art activism and different forms of art practices are often a subject of critique in the aspects of intersections with the human rights sphere. The connected overestimation of the influence of art by human rights defenders, activists and the connected community is one of the main themes of the criticism. The basis for it lies in the misconception of art activism and socially engaged forms of expression. By its nature art tends to ask questions, visualise problems and raise points rather than providing fast and easy solutions. Art, art activism or any form of artistic expression might offer some relief to victims, art practitioners or to society. It can transmit powerful messages and influence society. It can cure, motivate, empower and educate,

²⁴ Elena Martinique, 'A History of Protest Art Through Examples – From Ai Weiwei to Banksy' (*Widewalls*, 18 May 2016) <www.widewalls.ch/magazine/protest-art> accessed 7 August 2022.

²⁵ Wilcox (n 23) 25.

but art and artistic expression cannot immediately and directly stop violations of human rights.²⁶

At the same time, as a powerful means of expression, art and artistic expression can also be used to spread harmful, violent or destructive ideas. Additionally, there are works of art and other forms of artistic expression that reflect ideas that were considered acceptable and even admirable at the time of their production by dominating societal groups. However, now with historical and social changes such works and forms are viewed as repugnant. Among the examples are artistic works in the commemoration of colonisation or art from Nazi Germany.²⁷

All these facts create a contemporary field of study of benefits of using artistic expression as well as critique of activist art. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that art and different forms of artistic expression is an instrument of strong influence on the spheres of activism and human rights.

1.3 ACTIVISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR ART

All individuals involved in the creation, presentation or dissemination of art and any other kind of artistic expression are protected by human rights. Additionally, all people have cultural rights which provides them with access to culture and cultural values. These rights do not cover only professionals in the art sphere, the rights for artistic expression as well as cultural rights belong to everyone without any connection with level of expertise. Therefore, it can be mentioned that rights connected with artistic and cultural expression does not cover any special scope of the rights for those involved in art, cultural practices or any form of artistic expression. The framework of human rights emphasises the 'artistic' rights in the scope of human rights just to articulate the rights in the art sphere as often this sphere might be under threat.

At the same time, we cannot eliminate the specificity of art and artistic expression. Art and artistic expression as an instrument of self-expression, self-identification, cultural identification, communication and spreading of ideas can often appear under the unlawful and unjustified threats and violations. In such circumstances the framework of human rights and mechanisms connected with human rights can

²⁶ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Exploring the connections between arts and human rights' (Report of high-level expert meeting, Vienna, 29-30 May 2017) 12 <https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2017_arts-and-human-rights-report_may-2017_vienna.pdf> accessed 17 August 2022.

²⁷ *ibid* 15.

ensure the protection of the art sphere and all the forms of cultural and artistic expression.

Artistic freedom is an essential part of the democratic society. However, there are cases when governmental regulations and laws can pose a threat to artistic freedom. In some cases, governmental restrictions and regulations on free speech might contain threats to the arts and all forms of artistic expression. The potential threats to artistic freedom as a basic human right might be created in the forms of laws protecting national security, morality as well as limiting blasphemy, hate speech and other forms of destructive behaviour.

Even though the limitation and restriction might be essential for freedom of expression in democratic societies, unjustified restrictions can create a system of direct or indirect censorship, which violates human rights. Artists or art practitioners who create the content in opposition to state authorities, political parties or other power structures might be unfairly restricted or censored in their expression. Usually the threat of censorship comes from the state or state authorities. However, the state is not the only source of censorship. Censorship can also be imposed by religion or other actors promoting conservative morality norms.

The issue of censorship is being addressed as one of the primary challenges to the field of art and culture as a contribution of human rights and activism into the sphere of art.

Activism, NGO and civil initiatives also have its impact on the sphere of art and artistic expression by implementing in practice some mechanism of the promotion and protection of human rights in the sphere of art and art-connected practices. One of the most comprehensive reports on the situation with artistic freedom, cultural rights and human rights in the sphere of art was prepared by independent civil society organisation Freemuse. The ideas of dignity and human rights are upheld by the international human rights and legal framework within which Freemuse operates. The organisation tracks down cases of violations connected with artistic expression and uses an evidence-based approach to improve the protection for everyone, including those who are most vulnerable.²⁸ Work in a similar direction but with additional focus on literature is also done by international PEN-Center as well as by its national branches.²⁹ The state of artistic freedom as well as the art sphere is significantly influenced by the activism movement, NGOs and civil society initiatives.

²⁸ Freemuse, 'The State of Artistic Freedom 2022' (Freemuse 2022) 2 <<https://freemuse.org/media/yk2paxxb/saf-report-2022.pdf>> accessed 16 August 2022.

²⁹ PEN-Belarus, 'Right for Culture – Belarus 2021' (*The Empty Square Journal*, 2021) <www.theemptysquare.org/stories/right-for-culture-belarus-2021> accessed 11 May 2022.

2.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR ART ACTIVISM AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

In order to cover the legal framework of art activism, artistic expression and connected human rights internationally, legislative mechanisms and instruments are covered. In the scope of covering the international instruments the study deals with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR),³⁰ the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)³¹ and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).³²

Additionally, the study covers the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)³³ and other instruments at the European regional level as well as the Belarusian national legislative framework connected to art activism, artistic expression and the scope of relevant rights.

Conceptually in the scope of this study the international, regional and national legal framework will be researched and analysed, covering the aspects that considers the law as an instrument regulating art activism and other forms of artistic expression.

2.1 INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Cultural rights and rights for artistic freedom of expression play an important role in the international human rights framework. It was

³⁰ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted 10 December 1948 UNGA Res 217 A(III) (UDHR).

³¹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 23 March 1976) 999 UNTS 171 (ICCPR).

³² International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 3 January 1976) 999 UNTS 171 (ICESCR).

³³ Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights, as amended) (ECHR).

noticed by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in the 2018 annual report that:

by *engaging* people and encouraging their interaction through artistic and cultural expression, actions in the field of culture can open a space in which individuals and groups can reflect upon their society, confront and modify their perception of one another, express their fears and grievances in a non-violent manner, develop resilience after violent or traumatic experiences, including human rights violations, and imagine the future they want for themselves and how to better realise human rights in the society they live in. The increased social interactions, mutual understanding and trust that can be built or rebuilt through these initiatives are essential to achieve a range of human rights goals and to respect cultural diversity.³⁴

Therefore, the statement of the UN High Commissioner emphasised the unique strength of art to effect on people and to bring positive changes in the sphere of human rights.

Although there is no specific treaty covering aspects of art, nevertheless, artistic freedom of expression was settled in the scope of rights within the international legal framework starting from the UDHR.³⁵ Being a part of the rights for freedom of opinion and freedom of expression, freedom of art practices is framed by article 19 of the UDHR and article 19 of the ICCPR.³⁶ Within this framework, article 19 of the UDHR and article 19 of the ICCPR ensures both the freedom to receive information from any type of sources and the freedom to express opinion in any form including artistic.

Covering the right to freedom of expression, article 19(2) of the ICCPR is paying precise attention to the fact that expression can among the others be ‘in the form of art’. Taking into consideration the difficulties and ambiguity in defining what is art and what is not, the ICCPR by using precise language intends to avoid the challenge of subjectivity of definition and categorisation of art. The attitude towards naming and formulations that was used in the ICCPR decreases challenges of subjectivity and the philosophical nature of the definition of art that was faced throughout the history of art. Moreover, article 19(2) of the ICCPR put the concentration solely on the form of art but

³⁴ United Nations General Assembly, ‘Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General’ UN Doc A/HRC/37/3 (26 January 2018) <<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1474804?ln=en>> accessed 1 March 2022.

³⁵ UDHR (n 31).

³⁶ ICCPR (n 32).

not on quality, aesthetics, merits or any other characteristics.³⁷ Article 19 or any instrument of the UN also doesn't have the definition, term or concept of art activism as well as socially or politically engaged art. Therefore, none of the forms of expression is prioritised. To sum up the analysis of article 19 of the ICCPR it can be mentioned that the dynamic nature of means of art and artistic expression is taken into consideration. Additionally, there is no space for subjective judgements about the artistic or aesthetic value of the art, which can assure equal attitude towards different ways of expression.

In contrast to the right for freedom of opinion which is absolute, freedom of artistic expression can be limited. Even though the importance of artistic forms of expression was admitted by scholars and officials including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights,³⁸ this doesn't put any privileges for artists or art activists in terms of possible limitations of the freedom of artistic expression. Limitations and restrictions can be imposed according to article 19(3) of the ICCPR. Limitations can be implemented by state authorities only if it is legal, legitimate, necessary and proportional. The implementation of the three-factors system, that impose restrictions necessary for democratic societies, should have the following practical reflections:

1. in terms of legal regulation, limitation can be imposed only by the law, which is drafted clear and precisely in order to allow individuals to control their behaviour properly;
2. in terms of legitimacy of the restrictions, the exhaustive list of the legitimate aims should be settled with only possible coverage of the spheres of public order, health or moral, national security or rights of other individuals; and
3. in the terms of proportionality and necessity, restrictions on the art-activist practices or any type of artistic expression can be imposed only if there are no opportunities to impose less restrictive instruments or measures in order to achieve the necessary goal.³⁹

³⁷ United Nations General Assembly, 'Research report on artistic freedom of expression. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the freedom of opinion and expression' UN Doc A/HRC/44/49/Add.2* (24 July 2020) <<https://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?OpenAgent&DS=A/HRC/44/49/Add.2&Lang=E>> accessed 20 June 2022.

³⁸ United Nations General Assembly, 'Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' (2018) (n 35).

³⁹ ICCPR (n 32).

An additional restriction is imposed by article 20 of the ICCPR in the field of war propaganda and ‘any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence’.⁴⁰ As it mentioned in General Comment 34, prohibition settled in article 20 can be implemented only together with the norms of article 19(3).⁴¹

Additional understanding of the practical implementation of the norms of article 19(3) and article 20 is provided in the Rabat plan of action. The document helps to narrow down the field for restriction of the freedom of expression and provide a practically oriented understanding of the limitations. According to the document, in order to provide necessity and proportionality of the limitation six main aspects should be assessed. The main point for assessment should be sociopolitical context, position and influential power of the speaker, intentions of the expression, deep analysis of the form and content, outreach of the expression and likelihood of the harm.⁴² Even though the Rabat plan doesn’t take into consideration the specificity of the artistic form of the expression, such practice can limit states from imposing censorship on artists and activists.

However, despite the strong accents of article 19 of the ICCPR and approaches suggested by General Comment 34⁴³ the case law established by the Human Rights Committee (HRC) is not well developed in the aspects covering forms of art as an instrument and mean of expression. There are only several cases dealing explicitly focusing on freedom of expression in the form of art.

In the case of *Ballantyne et al v Canada*,⁴⁴ the HRC found a violation of article 19, claiming that artistic expression is protected by the

⁴⁰ ICCPR (n 32).

⁴¹ United Nations Human Rights Committee, ‘General comment no. 34, Article 19, Freedoms of opinion and expression’ UN Doc CCPR/C/GC/34 (12 September 2011) <www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/gc34.pdf> accessed 25 June 2022.

⁴² United Nations General Assembly, ‘Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Addendum. Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the expert workshops on the prohibition of incitement to national, racial or religious hatred’ UN Doc A/HRC/22/17/Add.4 (11 January 2013) <www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Rabat_draft_outcome.pdf> accessed 1 August 2022.

⁴³ United Nations Human Rights Committee, ‘General comment no. 34’ (n 42).

⁴⁴ *Ballantyne, Davidson, McIntyre v Canada* Communications Nos 359/1989 and 385/1989, UN Doc CCPR/C/47/D/359/1989 and 385/1989/Rev.1 (1993).

ICCPR. Considering advertisement as a form of expression within the case, the HRC claimed that the form or type of the expression cannot influence whether to put limitations or not. This statement can be effectively extrapolated on the sphere of art and art practices which are characterised with a huge variety of forms and types of expression.

A similar decision was taken by the HRC in the case of *Shin v Korea*.⁴⁵ In this case the HRC paid attention to the fact that provision of article 19 of the ICCPR particularly deals with the concept ‘in the form of art’ when considering the freedom of expression issue. According to the decision of the HRC confiscation of the painting as well as the conviction of the applicant were violations of the freedom of expression due to the absence of the justification of the necessity of such measures.

In the case of *Bakhytzhan Toregozhina v Kazakhstan*⁴⁶ even though the breach of article 19 was found by the HRC, the artistic nature of an art mob (‘flash mob’) as a form of artistic expression was ignored.

In the scope of international instruments, in addition to ICCPR rights, another international instrument such as the ICESCR also covers the sphere of art. As stated in article 15(3) of the ICESCR there is a provision mentioning that ‘the States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to respect the freedom indispensable for scientific research and creative activity’. Additionally, the right to be part of cultural life is mentioned in article 15(3) of the ICESCR which can also put an impact on ensuring the freedom of using art tools.⁴⁷ However, the ICESCR has a different legislative nature in comparison with the ICCPR. When the ICCPR has a mandatory nature aiming at the obligatory provision of the rights, the ICESCR due to the specificity of covered rights has a softer obligation. The obligations under the ICESCR provides the state with the obligation to take possible measures in the continuous process of achieving the rights.

In addition to binding international instruments, there is also a range of non-binding documents. The main strength of non-binding instruments lies in the sphere of influence on policies, strategies and decisions of international courts.

⁴⁵ *Hak—Chul Shin v Republic of Korea* Communication No 926/2000 UN Doc CCPR/C/80/D/926/2000 (2004).

⁴⁶ *Bakhytzhan Toregozhina v Kazakhstan* Communication No 2137/2012 UN Doc CCPR/C/112/D/2137/2012 (2014).

⁴⁷ ICESCR (n 33).

The most important, influenceable and powerful structure is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The main instrument issued by UNESCO covering the issues of art and artistic expression is the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (the Convention).⁴⁸ One of the foundations of the Convention is protecting cultural expression. However, due to its vague phrasing, article 7 of the Convention, which deals with the freedom of artistic and cultural expression, does not appear to be self-executing. As a result, even while it is not written in a way that makes it directly applicable to particular governments, it is pertinent for the interpretation of national and international standards. At the same time, with a monitoring system of promotion of fundamental human rights UNESCO also aims to pay attention to artists as well as artistic and cultural expression. As a result of such monitoring system international and national legislation should take steps in order to ensure and promote freedom of artistic expression as well as social and economic rights of artists and cultural actors. However, the UNESCO Convention's judicial application is difficult to predict. It may be overly exuberant to characterise it as a collection of legal requirements to defend, among other things, freedom of artistic expression. Nevertheless, the potential of the instrument cannot be underestimated.⁴⁹

2.2 REGIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Taking into consideration the context of the research work, which is connected to art activism and artistic practices during the protest movement in Belarus, the European regional legal framework will be considered in the study.

The main instrument which is operating on the regional level in Europe is the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms better known as the ECHR.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) <<https://en.unesco.org/creativity/convention/texts>> accessed 18 July 2022 (Convention on Diversity of Cultural Expressions).

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ ECHR (n 34).

Freedom of expression is protected by article 10 of the ECHR covering the ‘freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas’ with limitations imposed by article 10(2). The rationale of international instruments, as defined in the ICCPR, is comparable to the reasoning of limiting freedom of expression under article 10(2) of the ECHR. Any interference that restricts the freedom of expression can only be imposed when it is necessary, legal and prescribed by law, according to article 10(2) of the ECHR.⁵¹ Additionally, it should be noted while examining the provisions of article 10 that the ECHR makes no reference to or definition of the freedom of artistic expression, its protection or the concepts of art activism or sociopolitical art. However, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has a very active and clear position towards the importance of artistic expression and its protection. It is reflected in the case law and the decisions made by ECtHR in the scope of cases connected with forms of art.

Muller and others v Switzerland, which happened back in 1988, was the first case dealing explicitly with freedom of art and artistic expression. To make the decision of the case the ECtHR assessed the work of the artists group created the painting with unfavourable and sexualised representation. After creating a provocative work of fine art, the group was fined for their artistic expression and the work of art was destroyed by the state. After the assessment, the ECtHR settled that the artistic expression in the case was obscene and a subject for limitations. However, in the case it was emphasised that artistic expression is protected under article 10 of the ECHR and ‘those who create, perform, distribute or exhibit works of art contribute to the exchange of ideas and opinions which is essential for a democratic society’.⁵² However, importance of cultural and artistic expression doesn’t make artists immune from the limitations provided by article 10 of the ECHR.

A similar vision on freedom of artistic expression was delivered by the ECtHR in the case of *Karataş v Turkey*.⁵³ In this case the applicant published the poem with a critique towards the Turkish government. The poetry contains the reflection of conflict between Kurdish and Turkish population, emphasising the glory of the Kurds’ movement for independence. That became the reason of the applicant’s imprisonment.

⁵¹ ECHR (n 34).

⁵² *Müller and others v Switzerland* App no 10737/84 (ECtHR, 24 May 1988).

⁵³ *Karataş v Turkey* App no 23168/94 (ECtHR, 8 July 1999).

In order to assess whether the right to freedom of artistic expression was violated, the ECtHR assessed legality, legitimacy as well as necessity and proportionality of the restrictions imposed by the Turkish government. The criteria of necessity and proportionality was not followed in the case. This was also reflected in the decision of the ECtHR in *Karataş v Turkey* and a scope of other cases connected with freedom of artistic expression. Another interesting point that was raised in the case of *Karataş v Turkey* is the argument of the applicant concerning the artistic form of his expression. The applicant insisted that his poetry is just an art and work of literature, not a political message. The majority of the judges agreed that even plain text, novel or poetry can be the instrument and a starting point to promote hate, aggression and violence. However, the form of the expression was taken into consideration while assessing the outreach of the expressed message. In the circumstances of the case were admitted that the poetry outreaches the minority of the audience in comparison with the political speech.⁵⁴

In the case of *Lindon, Otchakovsky-Laurens and July v France* the applicant published a novel, which was considered defamatory by the French government. The book in dispute gave the French politician and his party a particular representation that would have harmed their honour and reputation. In order to protect the reputation of the politician and the party, the ECtHR determined that it was essential to interfere to right to freedom of expression in order to provide democratic values in the society. Mentioning the artistic form of expression that was used in the case, the ECtHR noted that '[t]hose who create or distribute a work, for example of a literary nature, contribute to the exchange of ideas and opinions which is essential for a democratic society'.⁵⁵ However, the violation of freedom of expression in this case was not approved due to the damage to the reputation of this artist.

Additionally, the ECtHR has developed a position towards satiric expression and artistic expression that might disturb, shock or look unpleasant.

Usage of unpleasant expression was covered in the case of *Eon v France*, where a placard with an unfavourable satirical allusion addressing the President of France was claimed as protected under article 10. In this case, the ECtHR made a decision that taking into

⁵⁴ *Karataş v Turkey* (n 53).

⁵⁵ *Lindon, Otchakovsky-Laurens and July v France* App nos 21279/02 and 36448/02 (ECtHR, 22 October 2007).

consideration recent political activism of the applicant, expression could be interpreted as one of a political nature rather than a precise attack of the person. The ECtHR also mentioned that because of the level of importance of free speech in democratic society, in political discourse some extent of offensive and unfavourable expression should be tolerated by state officials. Concern was expressed about the issue that criminalising or censoring satire would have a strong destructive effect on public discourse. Such censoring can silence public discussions and free participation in social and political life. It was decided that under the current situation satirical expression should be protected as a human right.⁵⁶

The issue of satiric expression was also covered in the case of *Ziemiński v Poland (No 2)*. However, the discourse of the case was more focused on journalistic expression. The ECtHR made a decision in favour of the applicant, additionally mentioning that ‘the use of sarcasm and irony is perfectly compatible with the exercise of a journalist’s freedom of expression’.⁵⁷

Another issue of satirical expression in artistic form was covered in the *Vereinigung Bildender Künstler v Austria* case. According to the facts of the case Vereinigung Bildender Künstler, an association of artists, was prevented from exhibiting a controversial artwork in the form of a painting reflecting the satirical images of public figures in sexual scenes. Taking to the consideration the unrealistic nature of the portrait of public figures, the ECtHR found it clearly sarcastic and protected within the freedom of artistic expression, focusing on the fact that ‘satire is a form of artistic expression and social commentary and, by its inherent features of exaggeration and distortion of reality, naturally aims to provoke and agitate’. However, strong dissenting opinions raised within this case reveal the importance of assessment of the specific facts of artistic expression especially in the form of satire, humour or any other unfavourable form. These facts should also cover the issues of interpretation of the artwork not only the intentional message.⁵⁸

Unfavourable action towards a monument was covered in *Handzhiyski v Bulgaria*, which additionally emphasised the importance of particular examination of every case.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ *EON v France* App no 26118/10 (ECtHR, 14 March 2013).

⁵⁷ *Ziemiński v Poland (No 2)* App no 1799/07 (ECtHR, 5 July 2016).

⁵⁸ *Vereinigung Bildender Künstler v Austria* App no 68354/01 (ECtHR, 5 April 2007).

⁵⁹ *Handzhiyski v Bulgaria* App no 10783/14 (ECtHR, 6 April 2021).

In the facts of the *Leroy v France* case, the applicant was found guilty of supporting terrorism as a result of publication of a cartoon picture of the 9/11 terrorist act with the line ‘we had all dreamed of it, Hamas did it’.⁶⁰ Artistic expression in the form of the cartoon picture in this case is a direct allusion idealising a terrorist act. According to the decision of the ECtHR, due to restrictions required for democratic societies, this type of artistic expression was not protected by article 10 of the ECHR.⁶¹

However, when it comes to cases involving any form of art and artistic freedom of expression, the case law of the ECtHR is still limited. It becomes especially noticeable when the amount of art-connected case laws is compared to the amount and variety of cases involving political freedom or media freedom. Moreover, due to the limitation of the amount of cases the content of the ECtHR’s assessments provides also quite a limited base for case law on the aspects of artistic freedom of expression. At the same time, the tendency of improving in this sphere can be observed by increased attention to the freedom of artistic expression as well as challenges and arguments important in defining possible limitations.

2.3 NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

If talking about the importance of different levels of regulations for ensuring human rights, the main role in the end is devoted to the national legal framework. International and regional instruments cannot be a replacement of the national system. This concept is also covered by the principle of exhaustion of domestic remedies. This logic put the national framework in first place in terms of ensuring state obligations in the sphere of human rights. The international and regional frameworks should support, direct and ensure qualitative operation of the national legal system.

The main fundamental principles, the legal basis, rights and guarantees in Belarus are reflected in the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus (the Constitution).

According to article 8 of the Constitution, the Republic of Belarus recognises the priority of the universally recognised principles of international law and ensures that the legislation complies with them.

⁶⁰ *Leroy v France* App no 36109/03 (ECtHR, 2 October 2008).

⁶¹ ECHR (n 34).

At the same time, the Constitution forbids the signing and ratifying of treaties that are contrary to the Constitution.⁶² However, it is considered mostly as a vector for the development of the national system but as a direct instrument of the national legal framework. At the same time in the system of national legislation there is neither a definition of universally recognised principles nor a list of the instruments that are recognised in priority. This situation creates challenges for the effective implementation of international instruments into the national legal framework.

The provision of freedom of expression as well as freedom of opinion is guaranteed by article 33 of the Constitution. The same article prohibits monopoly in the sphere of media and any type of censorship. The provision of article 33 doesn't specify artistic expression. At the same time no accent on any type or form of expression is made in the Constitution which puts all the forms and types of expression in the equal position in terms of provision by the state.

To compare with the content of similar provisions within the international and regional framework, article 33 of the Constitution doesn't put any restrictions or limitations on freedom of expression including any type of artistic expression. However, there is a general norm reflected in article 23 of the Constitution, which can impose restrictions on any rights that are provided by the Constitution. According to article 23, restrictions and limitations on the freedom of expression can be imposed within settled conditions. All the limitations and restrictions to the freedom of expression should be regulated by the law. Additionally, such limitations should operate in order to protect public order, national security, public health or others' rights. Moreover, besides the limitations of article 23, there is a prohibition of any form of war propaganda and hate speech, which is reflected under article 5 of the Constitution.⁶³

If to compare regulations and limitations provided by the Constitution with international and regional legislative instruments, one fundamental difference can be noticed. Within the framework of international and regional instruments article 19(3) of the ICCPR and article 10(2) of the ECHR includes legality, legitimacy and necessity

⁶² Constitution of the Republic of Belarus (as amended on 4 February 2022) <<https://president.gov.by/en/gosudarstvo/constitution>> accessed 28 July 2022.

⁶³ *ibid.*

as criteria for imposing limitations on the freedom of expression. The Constitution also covers the legality principle and provides a list of legitimate reasons for imposing the limitation. However, the principles of necessity and proportionality are not reflected in the Constitution. The absence of guarantees for imposing limitations only in the cases when it is necessary and proportional puts the freedom of expression under the threat of possible destruction. The same is relevant also for art activism and other forms of artistic expression. Furthermore, because necessity and proportionality are not legal standards, judges do not assess or evaluate them in their case decisions. All together it creates quite vague terminology covering the aspects of limitation of the freedom of expression, including any type of artistic expression. It provides a foundation for misinterpretations and disproportionality. For an autocratic regime, absence of the criteria of necessity and proportionality creates an opportunity for the government to misuse the existing law. As a result, such legislation can allow the state to put extra restrictions on the freedom of expression, for example, in the cases of unfavourable or critical forms. For non-democratic regimes it means the prohibition of the freedom of expression for specific types of expression, which are not approved by the state.

Besides the freedom of expression, cultural rights are mentioned within the legal framework of Belarus. Cultural rights are determined in the Code of the Republic of Belarus on Culture (the Code), which among others provides the freedom to participate in cultural life.⁶⁴ However, the major crucial for cultural rights point are not covered within the Code. The issues of possible limitations and restrictions or any mechanisms in order to put limitations do not find reflection in the Code. Additionally, the issue of avoiding censorship is not covered within provision of cultural rights. Moreover, no accent specifically on artistic expression is made.

To sum up the analysis of the legal framework regulating artistic expression in Belarus, it can be mentioned that the framework in general can ensure provision of the rights. However, practice of implementation of the legal norms shows that freedom of artistic expression and cultural rights are not guaranteed in Belarus.

⁶⁴ Code of the Republic of Belarus on Culture No 413-Z of 20 July 2016 <<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=Hk1600413>> accessed 28 July 2022.

According to the PEN-center report,⁶⁵ during 2021 there were 1,455 violations of cultural rights and rights of artists and cultural activists were violated. Similar evidence was collected in the report on violations of the rights of creative professionals, activists and artists during the post-election protests in Belarus between October 2020 and January 2021.⁶⁶ International reports also covers violations of artistic expression and cultural rights.⁶⁷

Analysing the cases provided in the reports and evidence, the main source of misuses and misinterpretations within the national legal framework can be noticed.

First of all, article 368 of Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus regulates punishment for insulting the president which often can be used against artists and art activists. The regulation put an illegitimate restriction on the freedom of artistic expression. The appropriate concept to use in cases of critics in addressing the president contains the principle of equality between public officials and private persons.⁶⁸

Another norm that is commonly used against the artists and different forms of artistic expression is the Law on Countering Extremism. The law has very vague terminology on defining 'extremist materials' which creates additional possibilities to use the law against freedom of expression in the form of art. New amendments to the Law on Countering Extremism also mention:

used for the purpose of carrying out extremist activity or its propaganda, including through a public demonstration, and when calling for extremist activity, flags, hymns and other musical works, attributes of uniforms, swastikas, emblems, symbols, graffiti, logos, pennants, badges and other items of distinction or their copies, other similar objects ... as well as any images of persons in respect of whom there is a court decision that has entered into force in connection with the commission of actions provided for by the article.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) and others, 'Welcome to Minsk: Violations of the rights of creative professionals, activists and artists during the post-election crackdown in Belarus between October 2020 and January 2021' (IPHR 2021) <www.iphronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Artists-Belarus-Final-15.03-1.pdf> accessed 11 July 2022.

⁶⁶ PEN-Belarus, 'Right for Culture – Belarus 2021' (*The Empty Square Journal*, 2021) <www.theemptysquare.org/stories/right-for-culture-belarus-2021> accessed 11 May 2022.

⁶⁷ Freemuse, 'The State of Artistic Freedom 2022' (Freemuse 2022) <<https://freemuse.org/media/yk2paxxb/saf-report-2022.pdf>> accessed 16 August 2022.

⁶⁸ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), 'The Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatović, 'Defamation and insult laws in the OSCE Region: a comparative study' (OSCE March 2017) 12 <www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/8/303181.pdf> accessed 11 July 2022.

⁶⁹ Law of Republic of Belarus on Countering Extremism No 203-Z (as amended on 14 May 2021) <<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=h10700203>> accessed 28 July 2022.

The extension of the list of forms of materials that falls under definition of extremist material according to the law influenced drastically also the sphere of artistic expression. According to the new amendments to the Law on Countering Extremism,⁷⁰ art activism, protest art or any form of artistic expression used during protest in Belarus can be considered as extremist materials. Moreover, additional restrictions are imposed on the images of people convicted under ‘extremist’ articles. Such regulation restricts usage of images of political prisoners and convicts. These images are often used in art activism, solidarity actions or different forms of visual representations, because topic of imprisonment on the political basis is a common violation of human rights in Belarus.⁷¹

Besides the expansion of the definition of the extremist materials, the Law on Countering Extremism uses such terminology as ‘*providing other assistance to extremist activity*’ and ‘extremist formation’. This way the law in practice became a strong and effective mechanism for the government which can be used for imposing restrictions on the freedom of expression also giving a space for the state to limit artistic freedom.⁷²

The terminology of the Law on Countering Extremism is also similar to article 130 of the Criminal Code, which regulates forms of expression connected to hate speech. However, only the strongest forms of hate speech can be criminalised such as genocide and other forms that are likely to cause hostilities. Neither article 130 nor any other legislative acts provide clear terminology or defined practice of implementation. Moreover, article 130 which should deal with severe crimes does not require an international aspect of crime which also gives the space for illegitimate restriction of freedom of expression.

The terminology of the Law on Countering Extremism also similar to article 17.11 of the Code of Administrative Offences, which prohibits hate speech, however, leaving a lot of space for misinterpretations.⁷³ The terminology under article 17.11 is not clearly defined which can create the situations of arbitrary usage and interpretations.

⁷⁰ Law of Republic of Belarus on Countering Extremism No 203-Z (n 69).

⁷¹ Human Constanta, ‘Analysis of changes in anti-extremism legislation (overview from the perspective of Belarus’ international obligations in the field of human rights)’ (*Human Constanta*, 5 March 2021) <<https://humanconstanta.org/en/analysis-of-the-proposed-amendments-to-the-anti-extremist-legislation/>> accessed 11 July 2022.

⁷² Law of Republic of Belarus on Countering Extremism (n 70).

⁷³ Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Belarus No 91-Z of 6 January 2021 (as amended on 4 January 2022) <<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=HK2100091&p1=1>> accessed 28 July 2022.

If to look at the practice of implementing the Law on Countering extremism and the Article 17.11. of The Code of Administrative Offences, only the content of the form of expression is taken into consideration. However, international and regional practice in the field of human rights emphasise the importance of considering the potential level of harm, intentions to cause real harm as well as likeliness of real harm.⁷⁴

Additionally, the practice of closed court trials for the cases related to extremism under article 17.11, article 130 and others provides lack of transparency and more chances for violations of freedom of speech using the legislative instruments. There is a limited list of circumstances when a closed court trial can be imposed. However, in cases connected with freedom of expression or politically motivated cases the vague interpretation of the criteria of interests of national security is used. Moreover, the decision of making the court trials closed usually is not justified with any detailed information. The general reasoning due to the presence of extremist materials in the case is usually provided.

The practice of closed trials is also implemented in cases connected to artistic expression. Closed court trials were raised in the case of Aliaksandr Sdvizhkov, who was accused under article 130 for reprinting the cartoon picture of Muhammad previously posted by a Danish journalist. Aliaksandr Sdvizhkov got the most severe punishment from all the cases of dissemination of this cartoon picture in the world.⁷⁵ In the case of artist Ales Pushkin the trial under article 130 was also closed. As a result, Pushkin got five years in prison for exposing the picture of an anti-Soviet actor within the art exhibition.⁷⁶ The court trial for Olga Klimkova, Maksim Sergeenko and Sergei Skoka accused under article 368 was closed. A group of activists was accused in a criminal case for exposing a critical installation representing governmental officials on the bridges.⁷⁷ Such practice leads to the lack of transparency

⁷⁴ ARTICLE 19 and Human Constanta, 'Belarus: Right to freedom of expression and "extremism" restrictions' (ARTICLE 19 2020) 28 <www.article19.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/A19_BY-Extremism-report_Eng-v2.pdf> accessed 11 July 2022.

⁷⁵ Dmitriy Pankovets, 'Белорус ответит за Мухаммеда [Belarusian will answer for Mohammed]' (*Delfi*, 11 January 2008) <www.delfi.lt/ru/archive/belorus-otvetit-za-muhammeda.d?id=15584833> accessed 16 October 2022.

⁷⁶ Viasna, 'Суд над художником Алесем Пушкиным сделали закрытым. [Court trial under Ales Pushkin is closed]' (*Viasna*, 3 March 2022) <<https://spring96.org/ru/news/107037>> accessed 16 October 2022.

⁷⁷ Nash Dom, '30+ женщин протеста: непростой алфавит политзаключенных-женщин [30+ women of protest: not an easy alphabet of women political prisoners]' (*Nash Dom*, 16 September 2021) <<https://nash-dom.info/71394>> accessed 16 October 2022.

and information about the cases, challenges in monitoring of politically motivated cases, opportunities to impose absurd accusations and lack of trust with the court. Additionally, the practice of closed court trials prevents defendants from the opportunity to express their opinion in public during the trial as well as the opportunity to see the support of the public and relatives.

The similar problem of lack of transparency also exists for the list of extremist material. The list of materials banned under the Law on Countering Extremism is so scarce in terms of information that it is hard to understand the content of the materials and the reasons for banning.

All together the existing legal system and the practice of its implementation create a tendency to use extremist concept with the aim of restricting freedom of expression including peaceful and artistic forms. The existing trend also creates a space for censorship. Additionally, due to vague terminology and lack of transparency there is a tendency of increasing self-censorship as a reaction on threats and suppression.

In order to improve the national legal basis and judicial practices in regard to the cases connected with the freedom of artistic expression the following steps can be taken:

1. Usage of precise and detailed terminology and rules of procedures in general practice and particularly in the aspects connected to extremism and hate speech which can help to avoid opportunities for misinterpretation and arbitrary actions.
2. Implementation of the mechanisms of assessment in terms of necessity and proportionality which can ensure just decisions of the courts as well as absence of opportunities to impose unjustified severe punishment in the politically motivated cases.
3. Provision of the transparency of the court trials as well as mechanisms of appeal to the decisions to make closed trials which are absent within the Belarusian legal framework.
4. Implementation of international and regional regulations in the sphere of human rights in the national legal framework as well as usage of case law of the international and regional institution as a base for argumentation withing national system.
5. Avoid punishment for critique toward the president and state authorities.

3.

ART ACTIVISM AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION IN THE
CONTEXT OF PROTEST MOVEMENTS IN BELARUS

3.1 CONTEXT OF PROTEST MOVEMENTS IN BELARUS
AND METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

The 2020 presidential elections that took place on 9 August 2020 in Belarus was followed by huge and prolonged protest movements throughout the whole country. After the results of the presidential election were claimed, a wave of peaceful protests started in the capital, regional centres and small towns in the form of peaceful street gathering, marches and demonstrations, solidarity movements, urban neighbourhood concerts and activities, social events, media campaigns and others. The reaction of the Belarusian society on the unfair and untransparent elections of 2020 faced the huge wave of violent response from the government, police, power structures and authorities. Major human rights abuses, including breaches of such fundamental rights as the right to life, freedom of expression, the right to peaceful assembly and the right to security have been documented throughout Belarus. Internet censorship, widespread arbitrary and illegal detentions, the use of extreme force against peaceful protesters, torture and ill-treatment in closed institutions, persecution of journalists and independent media, and the absence of fair trials were some of the most serious violations that occurred during the protests.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Human Rights Watch, 'Belarus: violence, abuse in response to election protests: Thousands detained; beatings; stun grenades, rubber bullets' (*Human Rights Watch*, 11 August 2020) <www.hrw.org/news/2020/08/11/belarus-violence-abuse-response-election-protests> accessed 11 August 2022.

All together the post-election events created a difficult sociopolitical situation, which was characterised by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights as a 'human rights crisis of unprecedented dimension'.⁷⁹

Over 16,000 people who took part in the peaceful rallies and demonstrations have been arrested within half a year of an active phase of everyday protests. At least seven people died as a result of action or inaction of the state connected with protests or critique of the state. Additionally, state officials frequently accuse people of crimes without sufficient proof and arrest them for political reasons.⁸⁰

Arbitrary arrests, tortures and killings, and violence of the police that were used against the peaceful protests led only to the unprecedented increase of further public protests, civic resistance and social activism. To simplify, conceptually the sociopolitical situation in Belarus was represented as the confrontation between two contrary, polar sides: the Government of Belarus from one side and the people of Belarus from the other. For Belarusian society the sociopolitical situation created a new form of relationships. This new form of relationships between the state and people of the state produced also new interconnections between the daily life, art, activism and sociopolitical context in Belarus. Therefore, the link that intersects art, activism, human rights, social and political context was an everyday practice and specificity of the protest movement in Belarus.⁸¹

During the Belarusian protest movements, the extraordinary wave of art activism and other kinds of creative and artistic expression led to the development of a new, distinctive language of communication as well as a tool for participation in social and political life. The way of artistic and creative expression was commonly used not only by the professional artist, but also by amateurs, activists and participants of the protests.

⁷⁹ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Enhanced interactive dialogue on the High Commissioner's report on Belarus' (25 February 2021) <www.ohchr.org/en/2021/02/enhanced-interactive-dialogue-high-commissioners-report-belarus> accessed 11 August 2022.

⁸⁰ International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHHR) and others, 'Welcome to Minsk: Violations of the rights of creative professionals, activists and artists during the post-election crackdown in Belarus between October 2020 and January 2021' (IPHHR 2021) <www.iphronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Artists-Belarus-Final-15.03-1.pdf> accessed 11 July 2022.

⁸¹ Olga Kopenkina, 'No Time for Art? Strategies of negation in Belarusian art during the 2020 anti-government uprising' (Winter 2022) 20 FIELD: A Journal of Socially Engaged Art Criticism <<https://field-journal.com/issue-20/no-time-for-art-strategies-of-negation-in-belarusian-art-during-the-2020-anti-government-uprising>> accessed 15 August 2022.

The huge representation of different forms of artistic and creative expression during protest movements and the level of involvement of the population in it establish a hypothesis that art activism and artistic expression contribute to the human rights sphere and democratic processes in the autocratic regime of Belarus. In order to assess this hypothesis, the study focuses on the possible mechanisms and instruments which might ensure the impact and contribution of artistic expression to the sphere of human rights and democratic processes in the context of Belarusian protest movements.

The main methodological approach of the study is based on the following pillars: 1) analysis of the documented visual, photo and video evidence of the art activism and different forms of artistic expression during the protest movements; 2) semi-structured interviews with experts, activists and art practitioners from Belarus.

Implementation of such a methodology will provide a comprehensive approach in researching art activism and other forms of artistic expression in the context of protest movements in Belarus. Moreover, the chosen methodological approach will create a diversified foundation for classification, conceptualisation, analysis and conclusions in the scope of the research on the contribution of art activism to the sphere of human rights and democratic processes within the study.

The collection of evidence of art activism and different forms of artistic expression during protest movements will be created in order to identify a research base for conceptualisation of its contribution to the human right sphere and democratic processes in Belarus. Further analysis of the evidence will be done with the aim of classification and conceptualisation of the selected evidence. Interviews with experts, artists and activists will contribute to a holistic approach and a comprehensive understanding of the processes connected with art activism and artistic expression. Additionally, interviews with experts, artists and activists will help to approve or disapprove the results of analysis. All together in the scope of the study both the strong and challenging points of the artistic expression will be considered.

Such a thorough methodological approach will result in the well-grounded conclusions on the contributions of art activism as well as the other forms of artistic expression to the sphere of human rights and democratic processes in the autocratic regime in Belarus.

In order to conduct the analysis and provide the further conceptualisation of the forms of artistic expression during the protest movement in Belarus, the following resources were used:

1. Instagram account of the Chrysalis mag. This source is an online platform of Belarusian contemporary art, which also plays the role of an archive of Belarusian protest art.⁸²
2. Kalektar. The source is created in the form of a research platform. The platform operates in the form of archive of Belarusian contemporary art as well as a tool for documenting and analysing the processes in the contemporary art in Belarus.⁸³
3. Zubr media. The source represents independent media that covers different spheres of life in Belarus. While covering topic of culture, Zubr media created a base of articles, documenting art, art activism and protest art in Belarus.⁸⁴
4. Charter 97. Independent media, which was documenting evidences of forms of artistic expression during protest movements in Belarus as well as neighbourhood activism, community actions and artistic events.⁸⁵
5. Results of the search by the keywords 'protest art', 'protest poster', 'art', 'neighborhood concert', 'neighbourhood concert', 'art activism', 'performance', 'culture', 'activism', art of protest', 'protest artist' in the Telegram channels, which were documenting the visual evidence of the events during protest movements in Belarus. Among the Telegram channels in the scope of the study are 'Couloir KYKY', 'Motolko Help', 'The Village Belarus', 'Nasha Niva', 'Zerkalo', 'Tea with raspberry jam' and 'Radio Svoboda'.

On the foundation of the abovementioned sources of evidence, the base of visual representations, photo and video of art activism and different forms of artistic expression is formed.

⁸² Chrysalis Mag (@chrysalismagazine), Instagram account <www.instagram.com/chrysalismagazine/> accessed 31 August 2022.

⁸³ Kalektar, 'Artworks' <<https://kalektar.org/artworks/>> accessed 7 September 2022.

⁸⁴ Zubr media, 'Искусство протестных художников [Art of the protest artists]' (Zubr, 12 January 2022) <<https://zubr.media/2022/01/12/hudojniki-belarusi/>> accessed 29 August 2022.

⁸⁵ Charter 97, 'Фотофакт: Подборка протестных работ белорусских художников [Photo fact: Collection of the protest artworks of Belarusian artists]' (Charter 97, 23 May 2021) <<https://charter97.org/ru/news/2021/5/23/423375/>> accessed 27 August 2022.

The selection of the sources is made in order to provide comprehensive and in-depth representation. Among the sources there are those which specialise explicitly in art and those which specialise in sociopolitical overviews, youth independent media, cultural, humoristic and urbanistic sources.

The usage of Telegram channels for the purpose of collecting the evidence can be justified with the specificity of communication during the protest movements. Being the safest among accessible messengers and means of communication, Telegram was commonly used not only for communication, but also as an independent media source as well as an archive for monitoring and documenting reality during protest movements.

After the creation of the research base of evidence, it is used as a data foundation for analysis, classification and conceptualisation of the art-activist practices and different forms of artistic expression during protest movements in Belarus.

The criteria of the date of the evidence of art-activism practice or any form of artistic expression is quite flexible. Only the starting point of the time frame is fixed. Thus, the lower border of the time frame for collecting evidence of artistic expression for the purpose of the research is from 9 August 2020 (the official date of the 2020 presidential elections in Belarus). The date is chosen as a main trigger point that caused the wave of the protest movements. The upper border of the dates for selection of the evidence is not limited.

An additional criterion of location is imposed as a limitation for selection of the evidence of art activist practices. There is a huge wave of migration from Belarus which also includes migration of artists, art activists and cultural figures. It is explained by the repressions, persecutions, censorship and other violations of rights. Therefore, there is a lot of evidence of Belarusian art activism and artistic expression reacting to the social and political situation in Belarus, but for abroad. For the purpose of the study, evidence was considered in the scope of the research material as valid for conceptualisation only if the location of art activist practices or expression was physically in Belarus. As for the art works and forms of artistic expression created in the digital sphere, the physical location of the art practitioners played the main role in the selection process. Only art works, created by art practitioners, who were physically in Belarus at the moment of creation and dissemination of the

work, were taken into consideration. The importance of the location of art activist practices or any form of artistic expression can be justified by the specificity of the situation in Belarus during the protest movements. Firstly, the practices that happened in Belarus reflect the situation from the inside and make a grounded base for the analysis of the mechanisms of impact. Secondly, art practices and different forms of art created under the pressure of the state violence reflect better the motivation, needs and messages important for the society. Imposing the criteria of location can also ensure the provision of the aim of the research, which is focused on the context of Belarus.

The main obstacle in researching and analysing evidence of art activism and other forms of artistic expression is the limited amount of evidence in open sources. First of all, such limitations can be explained by the increasing wave of repressions and persecutions. According to the report of the human rights centre Viasna Belarus,⁸⁶ the sociopolitical situation in Belarus is critical, which is also characterised with constant repressions, prosecutions, detentions, unfair and unproportionate judgements. The dynamic and scope of repressions and persecutions conducted by the state cause the processes of erasing and hiding of the evidence of past activities because of security reasons. Additionally, another reason of the limited amount of evidence lies in the participatory and community-oriented nature of art practices, which didn't suppose or could not ensure qualitative documentation of the process.

Continuing the path of the research work within the study, seven in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted. The selection of the interviewees was done in order to cover three dimensions of opinion on art activism: expert opinion, opinion from the point of view of art practitioners as well as an opinion from the point of view of activists. The profiles of the interlocutors can be described as follows:

1. Interlocutor A – actress of independent socially engaged projects, educator;
2. Interlocutor B – master of arts, art historian, youth theatre director;
3. Interlocutor C – active citizen;
4. Interlocutor D – actress of independent theatre, activist, youth worker;

⁸⁶ Viasna, 'Human rights situation in Belarus: August 2022' (*Viasna*, 19 September 2022) <<https://spring96.org/en/news/109095>> accessed 1 October 2022.

5. Interlocutor E – NGO activist, Queer activist;
6. Interlocutor F – choreographer, performer; and
7. Interlocutor G – artist, educator, entrepreneur.

The gender, age, main occupation, level of education or any other formal type of criteria were not taken into consideration as crucial for the selection of experts, artists and activists for the purpose of the study.

All the interlocutors were involved to a different extent in the protest movements in Belarus, although it was not defined as a necessary criterion for the selection of interviewees for the purpose of the study.

As a form of data collection, the semi-structured interview was chosen. The list of the questions for the interview is added in the appendix. The questions were chosen and formulated in order to support or deny the hypothesis on contribution of art activism and artistic forms of expression to the human rights sphere and democratic processes in Belarus. Several questions were targeted to distinguish the main challenges and strong protest works in the artistic sphere. This block of questions was used for more detailed analysis of the art-activist practices on the basis of concrete examples. In all interviews, additional questions were asked, when it was needed to get an elaborated opinion or if it was necessary to approve or disapprove the conclusions of analysis of evidence of art activism and artistic expression during protest movements in Belarus.

Interviews within the scope of the research took place online in the timeframe between 10 July 2022 and 30 September 2022. Taking into account the situation with repressions and persecutions in Belarus, measures of digital and personal security were taken into account. Interviews were conducted with the help of the Telegram messenger as one of the safest and commonly used sources of communication in Belarus. The average time of each interview with experts, activists or representatives of the art sphere was around 50 minutes. In order to collect genuine data and avoid self-censorship during interviews, the interviews were recorded only after informative consent. If permission for recording was not provided, notes outlining the opinion of the interlocutors were taken after getting consent. Additionally, anonymity of the interlocutors was guaranteed. In some cases, in order to hold an interview, additional measures of personal security of the interlocutors were involved. These measures included verification and provision of the additional information on the purposes of interviews. All the measures can be justified by the conditions of huge human rights violations and persecutions of art practitioners and activists in Belarus.

3.2 CLASSIFICATION AND CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE ART-ACTIVIST PRACTICES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROTEST MOVEMENTS

Art activism and different forms of artistic expression engaged in reflecting social and political life are not a new thing in the contemporary situation in the world. Connecting art, aesthetic and visuality with sociopolitical actions was observed throughout the history. Using artistic forms of expression of the ideas characterises the most successful and influential civic actors.⁸⁷

But for the context of Belarus the wave of different forms of art-activist practices and artistic expression during the protest movement has a phenomenal nature both in terms of the scale and variety. The rallies itself during the protest movements in Belarus did not look like a rally in the typical understanding. The rallies looked more like performances, performative protest art. There were drummers, musicians, songs, costumes and performances engaged in sociopolitical context. The social message to the government was often expressed in an artistic way. All together it created a sociocultural phenomenon in the society under an autocratic regime.

Another phenomenal side of the protest movement was in the detail that the language of art activism and artistic expression during the protest movement, not only by professional artists, musicians, actors and art practitioners but also by activists and ordinary citizens. The situation created totally new intersections of art, daily life and sociopolitical practices in Belarus.⁸⁸

As a result of analysis of the evidence of the art-activist practices and forms of artistic expression collected from Chrysalis mag, Kalektar, Zubr media, Charter 97, 'Couloir KYKY', 'Motolko Help', 'The Village Belarus', 'Nasha Niva', 'Zerkalo', 'Tea with raspberry jam' and 'Radio Svoboda', classification of the most commonly used types of expression is made.

Although the time frame for the evidence of art activism and other forms of artistic practices was not strictly imposed, analysis of the research material showed the strong tendency in terms of the dates of the

⁸⁷ Stephen Duncombe and Steve Lambert, 'Why artistic activism?' (*The Center for Artistic Activism*, 9 April 2018) <<https://c4aa.org/2018/04/why-artistic-activism>> accessed 1 March 2022.

⁸⁸ Kopenkina (n 82).

major amount of art activist and other art practices. Almost the absolute majority of the evidence used as a research material for classification and conceptualisation belongs to the time segment from 9 August 2020 to the beginning of December 2020. The reasoning of this tendency can be provided by several arguments. The time framework of the wave of art activism and usage of artistic expression time segment coincides with the active phase of the street protests. Moreover, the extent of repressions and persecutions of the art practitioners also increased with the time. According to the report of the Belarusian PEN-Center, the dynamic of the violations of cultural rights as well as human rights of artists and art activists has a strong tendency to increase. The amount of violations in October to December 2020 increased by 30% in comparison with the period of July to September 2020. If compared with October to December 2021, the amount of violation of human rights connected with artistic expression increased 93% comparing with the period of July to September 2020.⁸⁹ The monitoring conducted by PEN-Center⁹⁰ covers mostly representatives of art sphere and doesn't represent all the violations connected with artistic freedom of expression. However, it represents that cultural and artistic expression is highly persecuted in Belarus. The strong increasing dynamic of the violations of the cultural rights and rights of artists, art activists and art practitioners contributes to increasing fear and self-censorship. Moreover, due to the violations of human rights conducted in the form of arrest or detention, for some artists and art practitioners using the form of art becomes physically impossible.

For the purpose of the research evidence of the art activism was selected. The research base was formed with 224 items of visual, photo and video evidence of art activism, art practices and other forms of artistic expression.

According to the classification of the selected items of research materials, the following types of art practices and other forms of artistic expression were used during the protest movement in Belarus: posters, digital visual art, music and activities connected with music,

⁸⁹ International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) and others, 'Welcome to Minsk: Violations of the rights of creative professionals, activists and artists during the post-election crackdown in Belarus between October 2020 and January 2021' (IPHR 2021) <www.iphronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Artists-Belarus-Final-15.03-1.pdf> accessed 11 July 2022.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

neighbourhood art events and practices, performances, graffiti and street art.

Based on analysis on the evidence from research materials, the main tendencies and commonalities of each type of art activism and artistic activities can be described.

1. Posters.

The art activist practices in the form of posters for rallies were one of the most commonly used forms of artistic expression. This form was characterised with simplicity, clearness and character of temporary intervention.

Designed for the participants of the protests and by the participants of the protests, placards and posters of protests most commonly communicate personal issues through mottos, slogans and catchphrases as well as through creative visual artistic expression. The scope of the forms expressing the individual issues at the same time indicated collective interest of the society. Therefore, posters of protest became a main tool of representation both on an individual level and on the collective level of society. At the same time posters played the role of the clear and effective means of communication and socialisation on different levels: between participants of the protests as well as between society and the state.

Among the posters that were used during the protest movements in Belarus the following major types of the content or message can be distinguished:

- Statement of the sociopolitical position or disagreement with existing reality;
- Reflection on news or events;
- Call for empathy or emotional reaction;
- Humour; and
- Solidarity.

The types of the messages communicated by the society during the protest movement in Belarus can define the main needs and the main values of the society.

2. Digital visual art.

The role of digital space should not be underestimated especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. In the context of the protest movement in Belarus, digital space was fully used as an instrument for communication, dissemination of information, documentation of the events, self-expression and call for action.

The main peculiarity of this type of artistic expression in the scope of art activist practices in Belarus is that it was created most commonly by the professional artists, art practitioners or designers. However, the dissemination of digital art works connected with the protest movements went far beyond the sphere of art professionals. Moreover, usually digital art works were created and presented not from the position of a professional artist or art practitioner, but from the position of active citizens who participate in the protest movement.

Moreover, a lot of analogical intersections between digital art and posters can be observed. It can be considered that digital art played the same role of representation and communication as posters, but in digital space. The coverage of the main types of messages for digital art is also analogical to ones communicated with the posters during rallies and protest movements in Belarus.

3. Music and activities connected with music.

Music became a strong instrument uniting people during the protests. The impact and mechanisms of influence of the music as a part of protest movements can be divided into several directions. Firstly, singing the songs together as a community creates an atmosphere of solidarity and unity. Secondly, songs of the protests became more than just artistic expression. Songs of protests had a very symbolic meaning, which made them a strong instrument of empowering and translation of the common values within the society. Moreover, music played a role in the entertainment during the rallies and neighbourhood activities, motivating people to stay on the streets and keep the mood positive. Additionally, due to the symbolic nature of some pieces of music, by listening to the protest music in public people could create alternative way of expressing opinion.

4. Neighbourhood art events and practices.

Urban neighbourhood art events and practices became a unique phenomenon of the protest movements in Belarus, a strong sociocultural action and an example of well-built horizontal democratic relationships in community.

Artistic expression often was the core element of this sociocultural phenomenon as well as the foundation of the unity and communication within the neighbourhood. The content of art events in the neighbourhoods varied from district to district, but the main frame stayed the same. The format of the event helped people to gather together in the urban neighbourhood yards for self-organised artistic events, concerts or community events. The events were organised with participation of both professional and amateur act practitioners.

The practice was designed as a reaction to the violence in the city centre where all the big rallies and protest activities were conducted. At the same time, neighbourhood art and community events are the reflection of the need of society in unity and solidarity.

5. Performances.

The context of street protests and the need for communication with strong messages created a foundation for development of performative practices. It is interesting to mention that during the protest movement in Belarus performances were conducted both by the professional artists as well as by ordinary active citizens.

Usually the main aim of the performances was to transfer the message in a strong, bright and effective way, therefore, simple but shocking or touching forms of artistic expression were usually chosen. Additionally, such forms of artistic expression as performative actions created a strong connection between art and life. Performances give the opportunity for artistic expression to go out from the galleries and art spaces and connect with the reality of life. Additionally, performances brought collectivity and participatory experiences to the protest, representing the involvement in the social and political sphere.

6. *Graffiti and street art.*

The intention to claim about the demands and disagreements with the sociopolitical situation was also reflected in the public space with the help of graffiti and street art. Most of the street art works were done by the artists, however, exceptions were also represented.

There were different types of graffiti and street art identified in the public spaces during the Belarusian protest movements. Firstly, social phenomenon in the form of graffiti as an action of disobedience appeared. Usually such type of graffiti represents simple slogans and was identified on the objects symbolising the state – governmental mini-shops of tobacco. Secondly, street art reflecting events during the protest appeared. Usually such types of street art were created by artists who depicted major actors of the protests, political prisoners, symbols of the protests and others. Moreover, a lot of street art emphasising Belarusian culture and national heritage were created.

Geographic criterion wasn't imposed for the purpose of the selection of evidence. However, all the evidence selected from the art sources, Telegram channels and independent media were documented in Minsk. Such a situation can be explained by the scope of the protest in Minsk. Being a capital, Minsk is the biggest city with the biggest social activity. Additionally, due to the fact that major independent media were located in Minsk, activities conducted in Minsk were better documented.

From 224 pieces of evidence selected for the purpose of the research, the diversification of the evidence of art activism and artistic forms of expression was distributed as follows. Posters had the biggest representation in the research material, which is 89 items. The amount of represented evidence of digital art activism is 55 items. Graffiti and street art have 32 selected pieces of evidence. Quantitative representation of neighbourhood artistic activities and activities connected with music are 28 and 15 items respectively. The lowest amount of evidence identified is for performances, which is five items.

Such a distribution of the items in research materials can be explained by the simplicity of the forms of art activism and artistic expression. Within the research materials, the simplest evidence in terms of creation, preparation, dissemination, materials and number of people involved have the greatest representation. Additionally, more complex art activist practices are usually more personalised. Personalisation of art activist practices in the context of Belarus makes the artists more insecure in

terms of possible repressions and persecution, that is why access to such type of evidence nowadays is limited.

3.3 CONTRIBUTION OF ART ACTIVISM TO THE SPHERE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES

Based on the analysis of the documented evidence of art activism and different forms of artistic expression as well as analysis of interviews with experts, artists and activists from Belarus, a huge comprehensive impact of art activism and different forms of artistic expression on the protest movements can be noted. Therefore, the study confirms that art activism and different forms of art practices contribute to the sphere of human rights and democratic processes in the context of the autocratic regime in Belarus.

However, in the scope of the research no direct influence of art or artistic forms of expression on the existence of an autocratic regime was detected. Moreover, often it is hard to observe physical direct results of the implementation of art activism or any other artistic practice. It can be explained by the fact that art, artistic activism and artistic expression have more influence on the indirect processes in the context of protest movements and sociopolitical situation. It was additionally emphasised during the interviews that art, art activist practices or any type of artistic expression cannot directly destroy the autocratic system or ensure immediate provision of human rights in society.⁹¹ At the same time, all the evidence as well as the results of interviews showed that art activism and art practices effectively contributed to the needs of the society and cover the aspects of human rights and democratic processes in Belarus.

As a result of research, it can be concluded that the art practices and different forms of artistic expression during the protest movement in Belarus was not about art as such, not about beauty or aesthetics. First of all, using artistic forms of expression was about certain messages that society wanted to send. In addition to that, art activism and usage of artistic expression supported the production and distribution of important symbols important for communication and transferring common values. Moreover, art practices create emotions, ensuring

⁹¹ Interview with Interlocutor A (online, 10 July 2022); Interview with Interlocutor B (online, 3 August 2022); Interview with Interlocutor G (online, 30 September 2022).

support, motivation and inspiration for all the participants of the protest movement. Artistic expression during protest supported the processes of association of people in the fight for human rights.

The analysis of all the types of art activism, art practices and artistic expression in the context of Belarusian protest movements can allocate the main needs of society during the protests as well as in the frames of challenging social and political situation. Based on this analysis as well as on the potential of art as an instrument for human rights sphere and civil society activism, mechanisms and instruments of influence and contribution of art and artistic expression can be identified.

Conceptually, in the scope of the research, the five main mechanisms of influence and impact on the processes in sociopolitical life during the protest movements in Belarus were detected as follows:

- art activism as an instrument for solidarization and unity;
- art activism as an instrument for communication;
- art activism as an instrument of non-violent reaction;
- art activism as therapy; and
- art activism as an instrument of appropriation of public space and awareness of human rights.

Each of the mechanisms of influence played an important role in the complex social response to the state authorities as well as in the human rights sphere and democratic processes within the protest movements in Belarus. The details of these mechanisms have a comprehensive nature, which creates challenges in their evaluation and formal assessment. However, in the frames of research the assessment of the mechanisms of art activism and its impact is conducted based on the interviews with experts, artists and activists from Belarus.

Art activism as an instrument for solidarization and unity.

The idea to demonstrate that the majority of the populace does not support the manipulation and falsification of the results of the 2020 presidential elections was one of the fundamental goals of the process movement in Belarus. In such circumstances unity of the society played an important role for the non-violent protest. Moreover, connected with unity, solidarity of people played a crucial role in the response to violence and human rights violations. Artistic and creative expression during the protest movements contributed to the mechanisms of

building strong solidarized united community through posters for rallies, neighbourhood art events, symbols and symbolic art expressions as well as through performative practices.

It was noticed by the expert that:

in difficult times art and creativity creates an atmosphere and attracts other people. The more creative you are, the more you realise that you are not alone, that there are a lot of people around you, that people follow you and your ideas. Artistic expression is a manifestation of sincerity, it is the expression of your soul. When you see the spiritual manifestation of another person, you feel better, you feel more and more connected. And this connection can turn into a tremendous driving positive force.⁹²

Additionally, a collective nature of the art expression contributed to the creation of unity and solidarity. In this aspect, art activism, artistic practices and different forms of artistic expression have a strong potential. 'A lot of forms of expression had collective nature. It created the feeling of unity and solidarity. It showed that we are together and we are united.'⁹³

Moreover, artistic forms of expression during the protest creates a bright representation of the associated citizens, which not only showed unity and solidarity for the participants of the protests, but also represented the protesters as a new part of active society.⁹⁴ This also represents the tendency of building horizontal democracy based on solidarity and unity, in circumstances when the state refused to provide the vertical type of democratic relationships.

Art activism as an instrument for communication.

One of the strong points of art activism and artistic expression is the emotional impact it can impose. Emotional impact makes art activism a strong tool for powerful communication, transferring the messages and common values. Moreover, today's world exists in the circumstances where the whole generation is already raised on visual content and visual communication. Art activism and artistic expression during the protest movements also used this type of communication. Posters, visual content

⁹² Interview with Interlocutor A (n 92).

⁹³ Interview with Interlocutor E (online, 18 August 2022).

⁹⁴ Interview with Interlocutor F (online, 11 September 2022).

for social networks, graffiti, performances and installations, exhibitions and sociocultural practices were commonly used in order to deliver the messages. ‘This is an effective form of unobtrusive influence.’⁹⁵

The major part of the effective art practices implemented during the protest movements in Belarus was reflected in visual form:

Pictures are captivating. For example, when I’m told a story about 20 people who were tortured. Yes, it is very sad. But when I see the tortured person, when I hear the story about this person, how he/she began his morning, and at what point in his life was turned upside down, it feels totally different, because now it is already my story.⁹⁶

An additional power of art as a tool for communication is that it helps to influence a person not through the mind, rational or logical arguments, but through emotions. ‘Art during protest speeds up the assimilation of messages a lot. It’s conceptually the same what propaganda does, but in a human way and with more empathy.’⁹⁷ Emotional and empathetic connections increased the quality of communication and spreading the ideas.

Moreover, artistic expression was communicating not only with the participants of protest movements, but also with the state. ‘It was a very bright, very creative and sociopolitical message to the government. The message was so strong that it enormously empowered one side (protesters) and at the same time frightened the other side (the government).’⁹⁸

During the research the power of posters as a tool for communication were also noticed. In the context of Belarusian protests posters became the most common way of artistic expression. The effectiveness of this tool can be also reasoned with the artistic basis of it. The power and strong point of the artistic methods is explained with the fact that ‘art is the concentration of thoughts. That is why posters and other protest art was expressive, representative and simple’.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Interview with Interlocutor D (online, 15 August 2022).

⁹⁶ Interview with Interlocutor A (n 92).

⁹⁷ Interview with Interlocutor B (online, 3 August 2022)

⁹⁸ Interview with Interlocutor E (n 94).

⁹⁹ Interview with Interlocutor G (online, 30 September 2022)

Art activism as an instrument of non-violent reaction.

The reaction of the state to the protest movement in Belarus was disproportionate and violent, violating basic human rights. The unjust, violent and repressive actions from the state appeared to be a reality starting from the first days of the protest movements in Belarus. However, the genuine response of the society to the brutal violence was done in a peaceful way. For these purposes art practices and artistic expression became a new language of society in order to give a powerful non-violent response.

In the circumstances when productive dialogue with the state was impossible, people managed to claim their ideas in response to violence with the help of art activism and artistic tools. 'This is a great tool to show your position in a good, beautiful, adequate way. Art and creativity are the way to show that that some processes in society are acceptable and some are not, that there is good and bad side.'¹⁰⁰

Posters, music, performances, neighbourhood activities, digital and street art were actively used as instruments of non-violent response during the protests. This indicates that every common type of artistic expression was used as a reaction to violence.

It is explained by the fact that society cannot be silent. People have to reflect on reality in some way. And in circumstances when violence in response to violence is considered impossible, artistic instruments can show the efficiency. 'A person is not that powerful mechanism, one person cannot do something huge, one person most probably cannot destroy the regime and make a huge change. But people want to be a part of change. That is why people chose the language of peaceful expression.'¹⁰¹

Another strength of art activism and artistic expression is the unlimited field of creativity and ways to create and disseminate the message. 'The expression of society is ironic, accurate. You see how people find the strength to formulate it without aggression, without violence, without direct force, but like this, not destructive, in a peaceful way. It is extremely delightful.'¹⁰² Exactly in the situation of constant stress and violence artistic components allow to build up the line and strategy of resistance.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Interlocutor C (online, 15 August 2022)

¹⁰¹ Interview with Interlocutor A (n 92).

¹⁰² Interview with Interlocutor D (n 96).

Art activism as therapy.

Fighting for human rights and democracy is not an easy or fast process. In the context of Belarus, constant violence, human rights violations and injustice became a very traumatic collective and individual experience. Additionally, physical and psychological exhaustion, lack of direct results as well as a long-term perspective on non-violent resistance influenced the motivation and mental health of the people.

One of the effects of the art and art practices in Belarus was detected in the form of relief from violence, fear, demotivation and the feeling of helplessness. Art-activist practices and other forms of artistic expression became an 'antidepressant, the only thing that can support and keep motivation up'.¹⁰³

Some interviewees also mentioned therapeutic effect of the process of creating art pieces. 'When we use art, we create a healthy atmosphere. This is the kind of survival – to create in times of protest, in times of war.'¹⁰⁴

However, the biggest impact was noticed in the aspect of observing artistic expression and participating in art practices. 'Art helped not to go crazy, reflect on the violence and injustice, went through the traumatic news or events and to stay in mind, accept that event happened and you should react on it somehow with non-violent instrument.'¹⁰⁵

The major instruments for providing a therapeutic effect during the protest movement are neighbourhood activities and concerts as well as posters and some performative practices.

Art activism as an instrument of appropriation of public space and awareness of human rights.

During the protest movements another sociocultural phenomenon was observed in Belarus. People went to the streets and positioned themselves as part of public life and public space of the cities.

¹⁰³ Interview with Interlocutor D (n 96).

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Interlocutor A (n 92).

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Interlocutor C (online, 15 August 2022).

Several generations were grown up on the principles of learned helplessness. People didn't feel themselves as a part of the public space, as a part of sociopolitical life as those who make decisions. Physical interference to the public space started the process of raising awareness and becoming active citizens.¹⁰⁶

Physical presence on the street together with usage of art and art activist practices created a precedent for appropriation of public space as well as for taking the position of an active citizen. 'When you go to the streets, at some moment you realise that this city "belongs" to you. And when you see people on the street, you realise that this is your common city, you are the authorities here. There is a huge potential in it.'¹⁰⁷

Following this process people start to position themselves as holders of human rights. All together these processes contributed to the forming of active civil society.

Among the types of art and art-activist practices supporting appropriation of public space and getting awareness of human rights are, first of all, neighbourhood activities and concerts. At the same time performances in public space, installations and street art practices all also contributed to achievement of this effect.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Interlocutor F (n 95).

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Interlocutor C (n 106).

CONCLUSIONS

The modern problems and the difficulties of today's world such as wars, racism, climate change and lack of confidence in state institutions can create many new challenges for human rights. The complexity of the problems demands a new interdisciplinary approach in order to be prepared to respond to the challenges. Activism, the human rights system, sociopolitical movements and artistic expression have an impactful potential for the social challenges.

In the scope of prior studies, it was indicated that intersections between art, activism and human rights can be beneficial and effective for social and political changes. Moreover, due to the importance artistic expression plays in responding to repression and human rights violations, the topic becomes even more pertinent when it is discussed in the context of Belarus protest movement.

Taking into consideration the population's level of participation in the protest movement and the significant representation of various artistic and creative forms during it, the logic of research leads to the hypothesis that artistic expression and art activism is beneficial to the area of human rights and democratic processes. Therefore, the study focus is directed to potential mechanisms that could assure the influence and contribution of creative expression to the area of human rights and democratic processes in the context of Belarusian protest movements in order.

The study was conducted with the aim to identify the contribution of artistic activism and other forms of artistic practices to the domain of human rights and democratic processes in the context of protest movements against Belarus' state authorities.

The following research objectives were established in order to achieve the goal: 1) to define the core concept of art activism and explore the possible intersections between art, human rights and activism; 2) to examine the international, regional and national legal regulation of art activism and artistic expression; and 3) analyse and conceptualise art activism practices and artistic expression considering the context of protests in Belarus.

As a result of the study, the most interesting and relevant findings is formulated as follows:

1. In the study, the definition of art activism is indicated as well as the place of the concept of art activism. Moreover, possible interconnections between art, human rights and activism were detected. Thus, art is indicated as an instrument of activism and the human rights sphere. Such roles as being a communication tool, therapeutic instrument, mean of influence on empathy and emotional intellect as well as an instrument for protest and expressing resilience are defined as main inputs of art in the sphere of human rights and activism. Moreover, input of human rights and activism in the sphere of arts and artistic expression is reflected. Such aspects of art as freedom of artistic expression, absence of censorship and cultural aspects are provided both instrumentally and in practice by the human rights system as well as civil activist actions and practices.
2. A comparative analysis of the international, regional and national legal frameworks which regulates the sphere of arts and artistic expression resulted in indicating the main strong and weak points within the frameworks. Analysis showed that well-grounded legal frameworks on the international and regional level lack the practical aspects of case law connected precisely with the art activism and usage of different forms of artistic expression. At the same time, comparison with international and regional regulations resulted in indication of weak points in the legal framework in Belarus. Thus, beneath the law on fighting extremism, laws on combating hate speech, beneath absence of necessity and proportionality assessments, as well as under the misuse of legal terminology in practice, hidden mechanisms of unjustified limitation for artistic expression and art activism were discovered.

3. As a result of the study, classification and conceptualisation of the selected evidence of artistic activism and different forms of artistic expression was held. The classification identifies such types as posters, digital visual art, music and activities connected with music, neighbourhood art events and practices, performances, graffiti and street art. Additionally, it should be highlighted that the classification and conceptualisation of the art activist evidence revealed the key tenets of the protest movement in Belarus, which required art to serve as an alternative tool for acts promoting and advocating for human rights and democratisation.
4. This study confirms that art activism and different forms of artistic expression contribute to the sphere of human rights and democratic processes in the context of the autocratic regime in Belarus.

Moreover, the major mechanisms of contribution are detected within the scope of the study, confirming the role of art and artistic expression as a strong instrument intersected with human rights sphere and activism. As a result of the study, the art activism and artistic ways of expression are identified as an instrument for solidarization and unity, an effective mean of communication and non-violent reaction and as therapy as well as an instrument of appropriation of public space and awareness of human rights.

Altogether the present study provides additional arguments and evidence of the importance of art and artistic ways of expression. At the same time, the main threats for the freedom of artistic expression in the autocratic regime in Belarus are covered within the study as well as opportunities and suggestions to guarantee the realisation of the freedom of expression. Moreover, the study emphasises the potential of an interdisciplinary approach in contemporary circumstances.

The study had several limitations. The most important limitations are connected with lack of evidence as well as the unstructured nature of evidence of art activism and artistic expression during the protest movements. Within the time a lot of documented evidence was erased due to security reasons. Additionally, some actions, especially performative practices, were impossible to document due to the unexpected situationist nature. Another limitation of the study is that no similar research was conducted. Since there is no similar analysis made

during the active phase of the protest movements, it was not possible to explore the perception of the artistic expression as it happened.

The study opens the field of further research opportunities and topics. Further research on the topic of art activism can explore the impact of art activism and artistic expression on different groups of population. Additionally, comparative analysis of the impact of art activism and artistic expression can be conducted. Comparison of the impact of art activism in democratic and non-democratic can contribute to the further research of the topic. Moreover, hypotheses of different effects of art activism in stable sociopolitical situations and the challenging situation of war or protests could be explored.

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INTERVIEWS

- Interview with Interlocutor A (online, 10 July 2022)
- Interview with Interlocutor B (online, 3 August 2022)
- Interview with Interlocutor C (online, 15 August 2022)
- Interview with Interlocutor D (online, 15 August 2022)
- Interview with Interlocutor E (online, 18 August 2022)
- Interview with Interlocutor F (online, 11 September 2022)
- Interview with Interlocutor G (online, 30 September 2022)

APPENDIX

List of the questions for semi-structured interview.

1. Please, tell about yourself, your occupation, sphere of interest, other important and relevant details.
2. How would you assess contribution of art and forms of artistic expression to the development of protest movements in Belarus? What had the main influence on the protest movements? How was the result of this influence achieved?
3. What is the main strength and power of art, art activism or any form of artistic expression in the context of Belarus?
4. Would you consider posters for protest and neighbourhood concerts/activities as a form of artistic expression? Elaborate on it?
5. Did you create or take part in any type of art activist practices of form of art with socio political meaning? Why? What was your motivation or intentions?
6. Which cases you would mention as an illustrative example of repressions, persecution or unlawful limitation for artistic actions in Belarus?
7. Name the illustrative examples of art activism or any form of artistic expression during protest movement in Belarus? What makes it strong and powerful?
8. How would you assess the situation in the sphere of art and art activism in Belarus now?
9. Anything else that you consider important to mention on the topic of art activism in Belarus?

Список вопросов для проведения интервью.

1. Расскажите о себе, сфера интересов, профессия, другая релевантная информация.
2. Как вы оцениваете вклад искусства и других форм творческого самовыражения в протестное движение в Беларуси. Что и как повлияло на протестное движение?
3. В чем сила искусства, арт-активизма и других форм творческого проявления в контексте Беларуси?

4. Отнесли бы вы ли плакаты протестов и дворовые концерты/ активности к искусству протестов? Почему?
5. Участвовали ли вы в арт активистской деятельности или какой-либо творческой деятельности с социальным подтекстом? Почему? С какой мотивацией или целями?
6. Какие показательные кейсы или примеры репрессий, преследований или ограничения прав в среде искусства или за какую-то творческую деятельность в Беларуси?
7. Какие яркие примеры искусства, арт-активизма или творческого проявления во время протестного движения в Беларуси вы могли бы отметить? В чем бы вы отметили их силу?
8. Как бы вы оценили ситуацию в сфере искусства и творчества в Беларуси сейчас?
9. Ваши мысли, поводу искусства во время протестов в Беларуси, которые бы вы посчитали важными озвучить?



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