

## Situation in Belarus

**Forum:** Security Council

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### Introduction

Growing authoritarianism and a repression of human rights has caused a serious decline in both economic and political situation over the past few years. The government has violated basic freedoms and human rights. Furthermore, the government has infringed on the freedom of the press by harassing, censoring, and intimidating the press. Presidential control is pressing all communication media and newspapers.



*The President of Belarus*

Authorities are terrifying journalists who are trying to publish factual situations within the nation. Citizens and the press are kept in jail for months due to the fact that they criticized officials, participated in the protest, and other political reasons. Citizens in jail cannot see their families and lawyers, and their depositions are forged. They are not allowed to get any medical treatment when they are being detained for months and months.

The Belarusian protests in 2020 are a series of ongoing political demonstrations against the Belarusian government and President Alexander Lukashenko. The protests are the largest anti-governmental protests in Belarusian history, having started before and after the 2020 presidential election, when Lukashenko was about to be reelected for the sixth time. A smaller pro-government rally was held in response to the protests.

### Background

In World War II, Belarus suffered from massive destruction and population loss. Belarus was only able to recover its population 26 years later in 1971. It is also one of the countries that was severely affected by the Chernobyl Disaster. In April 1986, approximately 20 percent of wastes of Belarus' agricultural land was unrecovered due to the disaster at Chernobyl. The disaster also left a legacy of deprivation, disease, and hardship that will happen in the future. Belarus lacked a strong foundation for building a new economic and political system due to the depressing aftermath of war, destruction, terror, and seven decades of Soviet mismanagement.



*Mass Protest in Belarus*

After gaining independence in 1991, Belarus undertook the challenge of constructing a new member state that might provide development for a country and citizens. However, the

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majority of citizens in Belarus remain largely impassive to national politics due to the fact that the history of Belarus has given the majority of people a limited reason to believe they could influence national events. The issues of human rights, freedom of expression, freedom of speech, and the dissociation of powers are at the center of the debate.

### Problems Raised

Due to the presidential election, there is an ongoing mass protest. Protestors are demanding for democratic leadership and economic reform. On August 9th, 2020, all roads and entrances to Minsk, the capital city of Belarus and the site of the mass protest, were blocked by army and police troops early in the morning. At noon, the internet in Belarus was partially blocked. Government officials have claimed that the the blockage was due to a service attack outside Belarus. However, independent IT experts stated the use of DPI (Deep Packet Inspection) technology and the filtering techniques used by the Belarusian national internet monopoly, Beltelecom, and related state agencies may be the cause of the blockage.



*Mass Protest Due to the Presidential Election*

After breaking up a large number of people in the evening, the police chased several protesters in the Minsk for several hours, as has been a common scene in all major cities of Belarus. Law enforcement officers used batons, rubber bullets, lead grenades, water cannons, tear gas and flash bullets to quell protests while people were chased across the suburbs overnight. In Brest, a border town in the southwest corner of Belarus, demonstrators gradually disbanded, decreasing from 5,000 to 200 to 300. On the same night, in Minsk, security forces threw grenades to people, resulting in serious injuries.

The ongoing protest is one of the biggest protests since the independence of Belarus. Overnight, the security forces arrested about 3,000 people. Some of the demonstrators were seriously injured, at least 50 demonstrators were taken to hospitals, some in critical condition, and one demonstrator was killed. Reportedly, the security forces are even arresting people who were waiting for the election results near the polling place. In Minsk, a 73-year-old man with a daughter and grandson was arrested, along with another twenty people gathered near the 86th school after the polls were closed. According to the report conducted by United Nations Office for Human Rights, it is clearly recorded that there was torture and abuse of more than 450 prisoners, as well as sexual abuse and rape.

*European Union (EU)*

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On November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the EU ambassador approved sanctions on the second batch of 15 Belarusian officials, including President Alexander Lukashenko. The group condemned election fraud and repression. Two EU diplomats said the sanctions were aimed at supporting anti-government protesters attacked by Belarusian security forces. Restrictions include travel bans and property freezing (legal proceedings that prevent the defendant from destroying assets outside the jurisdiction of the court to thwart a potential decision, whether innocent or guilty). Lukashenko, who has been in power for 26 years, claimed to have won 80 percent of the votes in the controversial elections on August 9<sup>th</sup>, but the EU made it clear that it would not accept the election results and would not recognize Lukashenko as president.



*The Flag of EU*

### **The P5 Nations' Stances**

#### *United States of America*

The United States encouraged Belarus and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to reach an agreement on a macroeconomic stabilization plan and related reform measures. The United States further encouraged them to carry out further privatization and create a good atmosphere for business and investment.

#### *United Kingdom*

The United Kingdom cooperated with the Belarusian government and non-governmental organizations to support political, social and economic reforms. They have also improved the situation in the areas of human rights, the rule of law, and encourage Belarus to participate fully in the Eastern Partnership. The UK has partnered with Belarusian companies to establish trade links to promote mutual growth.

#### *France*

The President of France, Macron, urged Belarusian authorities to respect election results and to stop illegal arrests in order to free protesters that have been arbitrarily detained. Macron urged Lukashenko to reinforce his position as thousands of people who marched in Belarus for the seventh consecutive day demanded Lukashenko's resignation.

#### *China*

China has strengthened their bilateral relations. Since the two countries do not want to be caught in each other's regional conflicts, this relationship has not established a complete political and military alliance. Nevertheless, the two countries generally supported each other's positions in such disputes. In Belarus, China's interests and Russia's interests can be aligned to a large extent.

#### *Russian Federation*

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In the fields of politics and economy, Russia is Belarus's largest and most important partner. Belarus and Russia signed a treaty on the equality of citizens in December 1998, which includes employment and access to medical and educational opportunities. As a result, the two countries form a transnational alliance.

### Possible Solutions

Among the many problems that exist, solutions to two of the gravest are the following:

1. As most Belarusians are traced on their social contract and concealed the legitimacy of the current government, such a pretense should be abandoned,
2. Promotion of an SOS warning system that would make it easier to recognize problems in a crisis for conflict prevention.

In the past 23 years, potential social conflicts have been the main driving force in Belarus' political and public sector. This is due to the fact that Belarus currently has no universally accepted mechanism for resolving conflicts of interest among various social groups. There is also no public culture to resolve social conflicts. For many years, the Belarusian government's response has been the same. When certain social groups made statements about the existence of certain problems and sought solutions, the Belarusian authorities forcibly repressed them. The government ignores their interests and needs. Thus, while conflicts lurk, they do not disappear. The special thing about potential conflict is that it is invisible but dynamic, has a developmental stage, accumulates negative energy, and then immediately erupts in the emotional confrontation stage. Therefore, social protests occur every year in Belarus as potential social conflict energy accumulates. In 2017, there were multiple major offline accidents, and online accidents declined. This represents an extremely dangerous accumulation of potential conflicts in Belarusian society. Thus, measures should be taken to resolve this issue.

### Glossary

*Authoritarianism:* A form of government characterized by a strong central power to maintain the political status quo, a reduction in the rule of law, the separation of powers, and democratic voting.

*North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO):* Also referred to as the North Atlantic Alliance, NATO is an intergovernmental military alliance between 30 European and North American countries. This agency implements the "North Atlantic Treaty," a treaty signed on April 4, 1949 by an international organization established in European and North American countries to realize defense cooperation. It has a large number of nuclear weapons and conventional armies and is an important army in the West.



*The Flag of NATO*

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### **Timeline**

*1949.04.14* – The North Atlantic Treaty was signed

*1998* – Belarus and Russia signed a treaty on the equality of citizens

*2020.08.11.* – Protests resumed in Minsk and other central cities, and Molotov cocktails began to be thrown at security officials

*2020.08.14* – Peaceful protests continued (it started peacefully)

*2020.08.15* – Post-election protests began to grow sharply



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