

## **Demonstrations in Belarus**

### **Chronology of a revolution in progress**

#### **October 26<sup>th</sup>**

The opponent Svetlana Tikhanovskaya announces the [start of a general strike](#) to demand the resignation of Aleksandr Lukashenko, whom she had given until 25 October to leave power. She claims that "employees of state factories and enterprises, transport workers and miners, teachers and students" have stopped work.

The day before, as every Sunday since the rigged election of 9 August, thousands of people demonstrated in Minsk and other cities in the country.

#### **October 22<sup>nd</sup>**

The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought [is awarded](#) by the European Parliament to the democratic opposition in Belarus represented by the Coordination Council.

Parliament President David Sassoli congratulates the opposition representatives for "their courage, resilience and determination". He stresses that they "have on their side something that brute force can never defeat - and this is the truth." "Dear laureates, stay strong and not to give up on your fight. Know that we are by your side," he adds.

The award ceremony will take place on 16 December.

#### **October 21<sup>st</sup>**

In a [resolution](#) adopted by 602 votes to 44, the European Parliament supports the Union's decision not to recognise Alexander Lukashenko as President of Belarus

after the end of his term of office on 5 November and calls for him to be included in the list of persons sanctioned.

The Parliament recognises the Coordination Council "as the legitimate representative of the people demanding democratic change and freedom in Belarus" and supports its efforts for "a peaceful and democratic transition of power as a result of an inclusive national dialogue".

It calls on the Union to rapidly implement the planned sanctions against those responsible for the regime, to review its relations with Belarus and to put in place measures to provide economic and financial support to Belarusian civil society.

## October 18<sup>th</sup>

As every Sunday since the rigged election of August 9th, thousands of demonstrators [gather in Minsk](#) and in other Belarusian cities and dozens of them are arrested by the police.

## October 16<sup>th</sup>

The [European Council "endorses"](#) the conclusions adopted by the ministers on October 12th on sanctions against those in charge within the Belarusian regime and the reduction of political and economic relations. It condemns the continuing violence against peaceful demonstrators.

## October 13<sup>th</sup>

The opposition leader Svetlana Tsikhanovskaya, who has fled to Lithuania, gives Alexander Lukashenko until 25 October to announce his resignation, end the dispersal of the demonstrations by force and release all political prisoners.

"If our demands are not met by 25 October, the whole country will take to the streets peacefully. And on 26 October, a national strike by all companies will begin, all roads will be blocked, sales in state-owned shops will collapse", [S. Tsikhanovskaya warns](#).

## October 12<sup>th</sup>

At their meeting in Luxembourg, [the EU foreign ministers reiterated](#) that Alexander Lukashenko has "no democratic legitimacy", condemned the violence against the protesters and once again called on the Belarusian authorities to seek a "peaceful and democratic solution" to the crisis.

Ministers declared their readiness to adopt new sanctions against Belarusian officials, "including A. Lukashenko".

They decide to reduce political and economic relations with the Belarusian authorities and to redirect them towards civil society. They announce that additional resources will be allocated to support young people, vulnerable people, independent media, and the private and health sectors.

The European Parliament selects "the democratic opposition in Belarus, represented by the Coordination Council" as one of the three [finalists for the 2020 Sakharov Prize](#) for Freedom of Thought. The final vote takes place on 22 October.

## October 11<sup>th</sup>

Belarusian police [forcibly disperse further](#) protests gathering several thousand people in Minsk and arrest at least 250 people in the capital and other cities of the country.

The day before, Alexander Lukashenko had organised a [filmed meeting](#) in the KGB prison with several political prisoners including former presidential candidate Viktor Babariko and several members of the opposition Coordination Council.

## October 7<sup>th</sup>

[At a hearing](#) by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French National Assembly, Svetlana Tsikhanovskaya appealed to France: "Help the Belarusian people, help to avoid violence and civil conflict! Help to end this crisis in a dignified way, help us to conduct free and fair elections".

## October 6<sup>th</sup>

German Chancellor Angela Merkel receives the opponent Svetlana Tsikhanovskaya in Berlin, who [calls on European countries](#) to maintain pressure on the Belarusian regime.

## October 4<sup>th</sup>

Despite a warning from the authorities and further arrests, tens of thousands of people are again demonstrating in Minsk and other cities across the country. The Belarusian Human Rights Centre Viasna counts 77 "political prisoners".

[In a statement](#), the High Representative of the Union Josep Borrell considered it "unfounded and regrettable" that the Belarusian authorities are asking Poland and Lithuania to recall their ambassadors and reduce their diplomatic staff in Minsk.

## October 2<sup>nd</sup>

The Council [imposes sanctions](#) on 40 individuals responsible for the repression and intimidation of demonstrators. The measures include a travel ban and a freeze on financial assets.

## October 1<sup>st</sup>

[Meeting in Brussels on October 1<sup>st</sup>](#), the European Council condemns "the unacceptable violence by Belarusian authorities against peaceful protesters, as well as intimidation, arbitrary arrests and detentions following the presidential elections, the results of which it does not recognise."

It calls for an end to repression, the release of political prisoners and the opening of a political dialogue. It calls on the Council to introduce sanctions and encourages the Commission to prepare a "comprehensive plan of economic support for democratic Belarus".

## September 28<sup>th</sup>

President Emmanuel Macron [is visiting Lithuania and Latvia](#). In Vilnius he met S. Tsikhanovskaya, who [accepts France's invitation](#) to come and address the National Assembly.

## September 25<sup>th</sup>

The Baltic States [have expanded](#) their sanctions against Belarusian officials.

## September 24<sup>th</sup>

The European Union refused to recognise Alexander Lukashenko as President of Belarus. EU High Representative [Josep Borrell said](#) that the swearing-in and "the new mandate claimed by Aleksandr Lukashenko lack any democratic legitimacy".

## September 23<sup>rd</sup>

Alexander Lukashenko [was sworn in](#) for a sixth term.

## September 21<sup>st</sup>

Svetlana Tsikhanovskaya meets EU foreign ministers in Brussels. She is also received at the European Parliament, where she [declares](#) that the protest movement is not a geopolitical revolution, that it is "it is neither pro-Russian nor anti-Russian, not pro-EU nor anti-EU, (...) it is simply pro-Belarus and a democratic revolution".

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda, [presented an economic assistance plan](#) prepared with Poland and Romania to help "democratic Belarus". The three countries propose a preferential trade regime between the EU and Belarus, the possibility for Belarusians to enter the EU without visas and support for the country's application for accession to the World Trade Organisation. This plan should be presented by Lithuania, Poland and Romania to the European partners at the European Council, postponed from 24 and 25 September to 1 and 2 October.

## September 20<sup>th</sup>

Despite the mobilisation of the police, tens of thousands of people demonstrated in Minsk.

## September 17<sup>th</sup>

The European Parliament rejects [in a resolution](#) the results of the "so-called presidential election". It announces that it will not recognise A. Lukashenko as President at the end of his current term of office and that it regards the

Coordination Council as the "interim representation of the people demanding democratic change".

The Parliament condemns the repression "in the strongest possible terms" and calls for the "immediate and unconditional release" of all political prisoners. It calls for sanctions against state officials, including A. Lukashenko.

On the same day, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki [proposed](#) that the Union set up a stabilisation fund for Belarus of at least €1 billion. He will submit his project to the European Council on 24 and 25 September.

## September 15<sup>th</sup>

The European Parliament's Renew Europe group [proposes to award the 2020 Sakharov Prize](#) to "the democratic opposition in Belarus, represented - amongst others - by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, president-elect of Belarus, Siarhei Tsikhanousky, video blogger and political prisoner, Ales Bialiatski, founder of the Belarusian human rights organisation "Viasna", Stepan Svetlov, founder of the Telegram channel NEXTA, Mikola Statkevich, political prisoner and presidential candidate in the 2010 elections, and Svetlana Alexievich, member of the National Coordination Council of Belarus and Nobel Laureate."

On 16 September, the Group of the European People's Party in the Parliament also [proposed to award the prize](#) to "the democratic opposition of Belarus represented by the Coordination Council and a number of opposition figures including Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya".

## September 13<sup>th</sup>

More than 100,000 people are marching again in Minsk. The authorities announce 400 arrests. Since his exile, S. Tsikhanouskaya salutes "a truly heroic people" who continue their "fight for freedom".

## September 11<sup>th</sup>

In a [statement on behalf of the Union](#), J. Borrell "deplores the escalation of violence and forced exile of members of the Coordination Council". He called for members of the Council and Belarusian civil society to be "protected from intimidation, forced exile, arbitrary arrest and violence".

He calls for the release of prisoners and recalls that the Union is "determined" to take sanctions against those responsible for the repression.

## September 10<sup>th</sup>

After the visit of some diplomats the day before, Ambassadors from 10 Member States and diplomats from 5 other Member States [visit](#) Nobel Prize winner Svetlana Alexievitch at her home in Minsk to offer their support. S. Alexievitch is the last member of the Coordination Council to have been neither arrested nor exiled and is subject to regular threats.

## September 9<sup>th</sup>

The Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament [proposes to award this year's Sakharov Prize](#), attributed by the Parliament to human rights defenders, "to the brave Belarusian women in general, and in particular to Svetlana Tsikhanouskaya, Maria Kalesnikava, and Veranika Tsapkala".

## September 8<sup>th</sup>

The Secretary General of the Council of Europe Marija Pejcinovic Buric [calls for an end to the "repressive developments"](#) of the Belarusian regime and calls for a "fair and open dialogue with the civil society in view of preparing and conducting necessary reforms with no delay", for which she offers the Council of Europe's assistance.

[Svetlana Tikhanovskaya addresses](#) the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. She assured that the Coordination Council, "despite the repression, is still engaged in dialogue" and recalled that "Mr Lukashenko does not have any legitimacy" after the rigged election.

## September 7<sup>th</sup>

Maryia Kalesnikova, is abducted in Minsk and then arrested when she refuses to be forcibly deported to Ukraine.

In a [communiqué](#), the High Representative Josep Borrell condemns in the name of the Union "the unabating arbitrary and unexplained arrests and detentions" and demands the immediate release of all political prisoners arrested before and after the August 9 election.

## September 6<sup>th</sup>

As every Sunday, tens of thousands of people demonstrate in Minsk and other cities of the country. The authorities reported the arrest of more than 600 people.

## September 1<sup>st</sup>

Students start a strike movement at the beginning of the academic year. In the following days, several dozen of them were arrested on campus.

## August 31<sup>st</sup>

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania blacklist Lukashenko and around 30 other senior Belarusian officials, who are banned from entering the territory of the 3 countries.

## August 30<sup>th</sup>

Tens of thousands of people demonstrated again in Minsk and other cities of the country. Dozens of people were arrested.

In an op-ed published in the French Journal du Dimanche, the High Representative of the Union [Josep Borrell called for elections](#) to resolve the crisis: "The best solution would be to replay the game under the control of the OSCE".

## August 29<sup>th</sup>

Belarusian authorities withdrew the accreditations of several foreign media covering the protest movement and the repression.

## August 28<sup>th</sup>

At a [special meeting of the OSCE Standing Committee](#), Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, Chairman-in-Office of the organization, renewed the offer to act as "facilitator of the necessary dialogue" between the government and the Belarusian opposition.

## August 27th

Meeting in Berlin, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Union [decided to sanction several high-ranking Belarusian officials](#). The final list will be finalized in the coming days.

## August 26th

Summoned by the investigators in the context of legal proceedings against the protest movement, Nobel Prize winner Svetlana Alexievich refused to answer questions. The arrests of opponents continue.

## August 25th

Svetlana Tsikhanouskaya spoke [at an extraordinary meeting of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee](#). She declared that a "peaceful revolution is under way": "The revolution in Belarus is not a geopolitical revolution. It is neither a pro or anti-Russian revolution, it is neither a pro or anti-European Union revolution. It is a democratic revolution".

## August 24th

Sergei Dilevsky and Olga Kovalkova, members of the "Coordination Council" to promote a peaceful transition of power, were arrested in front of the striking Minsk Tractor Plant (MTZ).

## August 23rd

A further demonstration in Minsk brought together about 100,000 people.

Human chains are being formed in Lithuania, where Svetlana Tsikhanouskaya is a refugee, as well as in Estonia and Latvia, in support of the Belarusian people.

## August 22nd

Alexandre Lukashenko asked the army to prepare for action.

## August 20<sup>th</sup>

President Emmanuel Macron and Chancellor Angela Merkel [meet at Fort Brégançon](#). They repeated the Union's offer of mediation and assured Russian President Vladimir Putin that the Union does not see the crisis in Belarus as a "replica" of that in Ukraine.

## August 19<sup>th</sup>

[Meeting in an extraordinary videoconference](#), the heads of state and government of the Union reiterated that the election was "neither free nor fair" and that they do not acknowledge the result.

They declared that "the citizens of Belarus have the right to decide their future" and condemned "the disproportionate and unacceptable violence used by the national authorities against peaceful demonstrators". "The EU calls for a thorough and transparent investigation of all alleged cases of abuse".

They confirmed that the Union "will soon impose sanctions against a large number of those responsible for the violence, repression and falsification of election results.

They added: "We call on the Belarusian authorities to find a way out of the crisis by putting an end to the violence, easing tensions and engaging in an inclusive national dialogue," and expressed their readiness to contribute to a peaceful solution.

## August 17<sup>th</sup>

Strikes were organized in many factories.

[The OSCE offers its mediation](#) for an "open and constructive" dialogue between the government and the opposition.

## August 16<sup>th</sup>

About 100,000 people demonstrated in Minsk, the largest protest rally in the country's history. Thousands more people are gathering all over the country.

From Lithuania, Svetlana Tsikhanouskaya called for an indefinite strike by Belarusians.

## **August 14<sup>th</sup>**

[At an extraordinary meeting](#), the European Ministers of Foreign Affairs considered that the results of the ballot "were falsified".

They proposed mediation by the Union to "establish and facilitate a dialogue between the political authorities, the opposition and society in general" in Belarus.

They decided to prepare sanctions against those responsible for the violence, repression and falsification of the electoral results".

## **August 12<sup>th</sup>**

The authorities announced the death in Gomel of a second demonstrator while in detention after the August 9th demonstrations.

## **August 11<sup>th</sup>**

Svetlana Tikhanovskaya took refuge in Lithuania.

In [a statement on behalf of the Union](#), the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, said the election was "neither free nor fair.

He added: "We call on Belarusian political leaders to engage in a real and inclusive dialogue with all parts of society in order to avoid further violence. The EU will continue to support a democratic, independent, sovereign, prosperous and stable Belarus."

## **August 10<sup>th</sup>**

China and Russia acknowledge the outcome of the election, which is being challenged by the Member States of the European Union.

Demonstrations continued, one demonstrator was killed, 2,000 people were arrested.

**August 9<sup>th</sup>**

**Presidential election in Belarus**

The outgoing President Alexander Lukashenko won with 80.23% of the votes. Svetlana Tsikhanouskaya, opposition candidate after the imprisonment of her husband, the opponent Sergei Tikhanovski, was officially credited with 9.9%.

Demonstrations took place in the capital Minsk, 3,000 people were arrested.