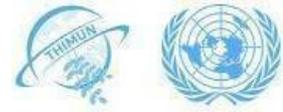




GeMUN
Genoa Model United Nations

Affiliated with



Security Council

Topic 2: The Situation in Belarus

Research Report by Filippo Bobel

Index

1. Definition of Key Terms	2
2. Introduction	2
3. Background Information	3
4. Major Parties Involved	5
Internal Parties	5
European Union	5
Russian Federation	5
5. Timeline of Events	6
6. UN Involvement	6
7. Bibliography	7



1. Definition of Key Terms

Extrajudicial punishment: “a penalty that should be inflicted on an offender through judicial procedure delivered without legal authority” (Merriam-Webster)

Excessive violence: “an instance of violent treatment or procedure exceeding what is usual, proper, necessary, or normal” (Merriam-Webster)

Arbitrary arrest: “the taking or detaining in custody by authority of law marked by or resulting from the unrestrained and often tyrannical exercise of power” (Merriam-Webster)

Violent crackdown: “to take positive regulatory or disciplinary action, marked by the use of usually harmful or destructive physical force” (Merriam-Webster)

2. Introduction

The protests in Belarus have been, albeit shortly, in the spotlight of international mainstream media. The brutal repression and arbitrary arrests of peaceful protesters sparked the outrage of worldwide viewers, and the concern of international human rights observers and NGOs.

The country, geographically located between the EU, Ukraine, and Russia, is also at a crossroads of the geopolitical ambitions of the two blocs.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has had a tight relationship with Russia: in 2020, the Belarusian National Assembly ratified an agreement for the mutual recognition of visas with the bigger neighbor, enabling Russians and Belarusians to freely work, study and travel in the respective countries.

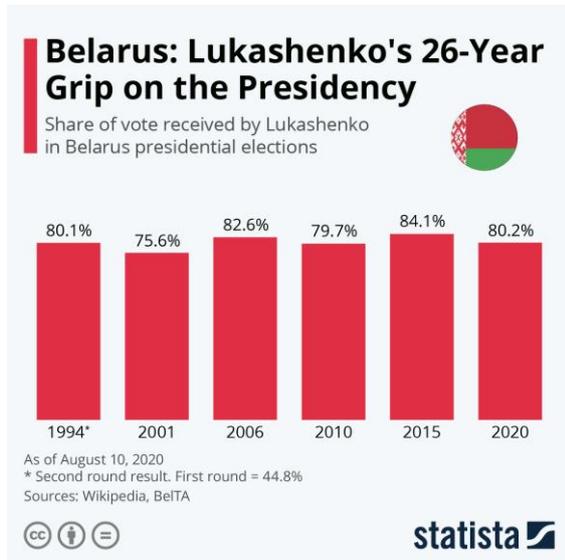
Should the protests succeed in overthrowing the government, it could result in a shift from the Russian bloc to the NATO/EU Countries, which may severely undermine Russian influence in the area and have major geopolitical implications.



The main task of the delegates is to weigh the respective national interests and mediate so as to draft a balanced resolution to restore order whilst also ensuring human rights and personal freedom, solving this delicate national crisis before its escalation.



3. Background Information



The presidency of Belarus has been held by Alexandr Lukashenko for more than 25 years. Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union, he has dominated the political landscape of his country, virtually unchallenged and de facto unchallengeable due to a rigged electoral process. Belarus has been infamously referred to as “Europe’s last dictatorship” in a statement by the European Parliament. In spring 2020, he announced his participation in the incumbent general elections, thereby running for his sixth consecutive term in office.

The protests began after the arrest of Sergei Tikhanovsky, a Belarusian businessman who compared the sitting president to a cockroach (a reference to a popular children’s poem) and started a series of interviews, which showed how several people in the countryside were deeply unsatisfied with Lukashenko’s rule. Tikhanovsky was then arrested for having allegedly tried to muster support for a NATO-backed coup that would have overthrown Lukashenko.

Another significant milestone was the arrest of other popular members of the opposition: Statkevich and Viktor Babaryko, who were accused of orchestrating a coup attempt as well. It is unclear whether Mr. Babaryko’s and Mr. Statkevich’s supposed plot appears to be the same as Mr. Tikhanovsky’s or if there were two distinct machinations. Following the two arrests, Tikhanovsky’s wife Svetlana Tikhanovskaya decided to run for the presidential election and was promptly supported by those opposed to Lukashenko.

On election day, all physical and virtual communications to Minsk were suddenly obstructed: the roads were patrolled by police and military officials, and the Internet was partially blocked. An exit poll by the State-sponsored tv service was released, indicating a massive landslide victory by Lukashenko. Following this hardly credible triumph, protesters took to the streets, calling for free and fair elections.

The protests were at first peaceful but then degenerated when clashes broke out with law enforcement officers. Violent crowd control strategies were implemented, including water



cannons, rubber bullets, and flashbang grenades, leaving one protester dead and several others critically injured. An estimated 3000 people were arrested.

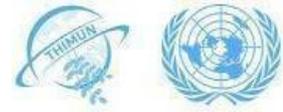
In the following days, largely peaceful protests continued to grow in the most populated Belarusian cities. Many protesters wore white clothing in response to the abuses of violence perpetrated by the police. In response to them, Lukashenko tried to create his own counter-demonstration, refusing to step down and labelling the protests as the latest NATO plot to undermine him. The European Union banned him from entering its territory, stating its non-recognition of the election results and strongly urging the authorities to release the illegal prisoners.

A series of strikes sprawled in the country, and several Belarusians, including high-ranking government officials, resigned in solidarity with the protesters. At the same time, several diplomatic reactions to the protests started to emerge, and German chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron offered to jointly mediate the elaboration of a solution for the crisis. This momentum culminated with the “march for a new Belarus” in Minsk, which had an estimated 250000 participants.

Sviatlana Tikhanovskaya's fled to Lithuania after the election results, fearing that she might have otherwise been abducted. There, she formed the Coordination Council, a non-elected body for the peaceful transfer of power. She has been recognized as ad interim representative of the Belarusian people by the European Union.

The protests are still ongoing, with a partial tally of over 32000 people arrested.





4. Major Parties Involved

○ **Internal Parties**

The overwhelming majority of the political forces in Belarus can be labelled as “left-wing”, therefore a more reasonable way to classify them is by their allegiance (or opposition) to president Alexandr Lukashenko. The protests have internally been supported by a series of pro-EU parties, such as the Christian Democrats, the Social Democrats, the Left, the Green party, and the Party of Freedom and Progress. On the other hand, the parties which have condemned or opposed them are essentially pro-government: the Liberal Democratic Party, the Communist Party, the Agrarian Party, and the Republican Party.

Some Belarusian law enforcement agencies have been deployed to manage the protests: the OMON special forces, the national intelligence agency KGB, Minsk police, and a number of anti-terrorism special forces militias. Finally, some far-left anarchist movements (most notably “Revolutionary Action” and “Anarchist Black Cross”) have actively backed the protests.

○ **European Union**

The European Union has not recognized Lukashenko’s re-elections, as it condemned the elections as unfair and not free. So far, it has drafted and imposed sanctions on 7 entities and 88 individuals, including Alexandr Lukashenko.

The sanctions consist of a travel ban preventing them from entering the EU Member States as well as measures to target their personal wealth. Their purpose is to “stop the disproportionate and unacceptable violence”, and to ensure a democratic transition of power. The European Union has also declared its intention to provide economical support for “democratic Belarus”.

○ **Russian Federation**

The Russian Federation has officially recognized Alexandr Lukashenko’s election as valid, thereby recognizing him as the legitimate president. President Vladimir Putin has however also stressed the importance of listening to the demands of the protesters, encouraging change via constitutional methods. The fact that Tikhonovskaya's Coordination Council did not refuse to discuss with Russia was welcomed by Russian officials.



He did not, on the other hand, address the instances of police brutality, also suggesting that an intervention of Russian “law enforcement” forces is on the table. These may not be simple police forces, but also the Russian National Guard as well as the FSB, the Russian intelligence agencies. The purpose of such an operation would be to restore order and ensure Lukashenko’s presidency to continue.

5. Timeline of Events

- 29 May - Arrest of Sergei Tikhanovsky
- 31 May - Arrest of Mikola Statkevich
- 18 June - Arrest of Viktor Babaryko
- 19 June - Svetlana Tikhanovskaya formalizes her candidacy
- 30 July - Opposition rally
- 9 August - Election day, protests break out
- 11 August Tikhanovskaya flees to Lithuania
- 23 August - March for a new Belarus

6. UN Involvement

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet has urged the Belarusian authorities to end the human rights violations, such as the harassment and arrests of peaceful protesters as well as reporters.

Her concerns have been echoed by the Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Rupert Colville, who also pointed at instances of torture, mass detention excessive use of force, and limitations to the right to education.

Systematic acts of repression by the judiciary were also reported by Special Rapporteurs for Human Rights. NGOs have called for a Special Session to address the matter.

Opposition leader Sviatlana Tikhanovskaya has asked the UN to condemn the human rights abuses and to send a monitoring mission to Belarus.

No significant legal steps have yet been taken by the United Nations Security Council regarding this issue.



GeMUN
Genoa Model United Nations

Affiliated with



7. Bibliography

- <https://www.britannica.com/place/Belarus>
- <https://www.merriam-webster.com>
- <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/restrictive-measures-following-the-2020-belarus-presidential-elections/>
- <https://tass.com/world/1194445>
- <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1079282>
- <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/11/1077662>
- <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26520&LangID=E>
- <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/belarus>
- <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/08/27/open-letter-united-nations-human-rights-council-regarding-situation-belarus>
- <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-belarus-election-un-idUSKBN25V242>
- <https://www.voanews.com/europe/un-widespread-human-rights-violations-continue-unchecked-belarus>