

Berlin/Minsk 21 July 2020

## BELARUS ELECTION ALERT #4

### Lukashenka removes key rivals from Presidential race sparking protests across the country

The Central Election Commission (CEC) has declined to register Viktor Babaryka and Valery Tsapkala, making two of Aliaksandr Lukashenka's key rivals ineligible to run for President. Following this decision, protests broke out across Belarus which were accompanied by a wave of arrests. Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections (HRDs), now the only independent observers of this election as no international election observation mission will be taking place, report on this and the entire nomination and registration phase of the election campaign in their latest weekly report. During last week's online discussion, representatives from HRDs, as well as other experts and the former Director of the OSCE ODIHR, discussed the first stages of the election campaign and these newest developments. More details on this and links to reports and to the full recording and brief summary of the online discussion can be found below.



*Riot police confronting protesters in central Minsk. July 14, 2020*

[Viktar Babaryka and Valery Tsapkala were not registered](#) to run for the Presidency. Babaryka was denied registration over alleged flaws in his income and property declaration and the participation of a foreign organization in his campaign as many in his nomination group are employees of Belgazprombank, which is 99.6% Russian owned. Tsapkala was disqualified after he reportedly failed to submit the necessary 100,000 valid signatures to support his nomination although his campaign states that over 160,000 authentic signatures were collected.

This decision sparked protests across Belarus, which police violently dispersed. A spokesperson for the Interior Ministry said [250 protesters were arrested across Belarus](#), with at least 230 people detained in Minsk and several dozens more in Homieĺ, Pružany, Brest and Babrujsk. Journalists who were covering the protests were also among the detainees.

HRDs stated in their [latest report](#) on the entire nomination and signature collection phase of the election campaign that this was marred by serious violations of the standards of free and democratic elections. The nomination groups of some candidates were subjected to significant pressure from law enforcement agencies and the verification of signatures by the CEC was not transparent. The CEC reported almost two and a half times more signatures collected by two potential candidates than what they had previously announced, which casts serious doubts over the validity of the CEC's reported figures on collected signatures.

It is now also clear that there will not be an international election observation mission by [OSCE ODIHR](#) as they did not receive a timely invitation to observe this election.

During an online discussion held last week, election observers and experts from Belarus and Germany analyzed the impact of this unprecedented election campaign, the protest dynamics, as well as possible ways out from the current political deadlock in Belarus. The full webinar recording, and a short summary are available [here](#).

More reports on the election campaign in Belarus can be found on the website of the "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections" [here](#).

More news on Belarus also available at [www.epde.org](http://www.epde.org)

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