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BELARUS ELECTION ALERT #1

Will the Presidential election be a challenge for Lukashenka?

Candidates' signature collection and protests against Lukashenka continue amid crackdowns against candidates and activists

The Belarusian Presidential election is gearing up to be an exciting race with mass public engagement and protests across the country against the incumbent President. EPDE cooperates with the [Human Rights Center "Viasna"](#) and the [Belarusian Helsinki Committee](#) in Belarus and supports their joint election observation campaign, the "[Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections](#)". Until the election day on August 9, EPDE will share reports from this observation campaign along with information from other sources in these biweekly Election Alerts to inform you about the ongoing election campaign.



People line up in Homel to sign a petition supporting the candidacy of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya on May 28. Source: rferl.org

Voters are lining up to lend their support to the nomination of candidates who could pose a serious threat to Lukashenka's decades long rule. This has, however, unfortunately also been met with repressions by authorities to disrupt the campaigns of presidential hopefuls.

One popular candidate, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, is running in the stead of her husband [Siarhei Tsikhanouski, a popular vlogger who has been arrested multiple times](#) in the past weeks for participating in election rallies and who has, as a result of this, been prevented from registering a

nomination group for his candidacy. The country's human rights community has called Tsikhanouski and other activists of his wife's campaign who have been detained [political prisoners](#). Human rights organizations insist on the [immediate release of all activists](#) who have been detained under Article 342 for allegedly organizing group actions that grossly violated public order, when in reality they took part in lawful rallies.

Other rallies for the collection of nomination signatures have also been interrupted by police and multiple activists and bloggers have been arrested, while observers report an [abuse of administrative resources](#) in the collection of signatures in support of incumbent President Lukashenka. Observers note that the Central Election Commission has been selective in how it interprets electoral law and deals with complaints of electoral violations, often ruling in the favor of certain candidates.

The authorities' crackdown on peaceful protesters and civil society activists during this election have prompted concerned responses by the international community, such as from the [European Parliament](#); and EU and US envoys to Belarus have urged the Belarusian government to [officially invite OSCE/ODIHR observers](#).

In general, representatives of the ["Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections" note](#) a continuing trend of increasing repressions during the election period, including against the direct participants in the election, an escalation of tensions, and an atmosphere of fear in society.

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

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