

Envoy Calls Arrests Correct

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Alexander Surikov, Russia's ambassador to Belarus, said Thursday that local authorities acted correctly when they detained 11 Russian citizens in Minsk during a rally to protest the outcome of the presidential elections on Sunday.

The rally was banned by authorities, which means that the Russians broke the law simply by being present, even though they did not riot, Surikov said, Interfax reported.

The embassy is providing legal help to detainees, who face up to 15 days of arrest, he said, calling on Belarussian authorities to forgive them, promising "reciprocal love" from Russia.

Incumbent Alexander Lukashenko overwhelmingly won the vote. About 700 protesters and seven opposition candidates were detained during the violent crackdown on protests.✕

(MT)