

Belarus Jails More Protesters Over Election Rally

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MINSK — Belarus has jailed more protesters for their part in an election rally against President Alexander Lukashenko last December, sentencing three men each to three to four years in a top-security prison.

The three were among several hundred people who were initially rounded up in a police crackdown on the Minsk rally on Dec. 19, the day after Lukashenko was re-elected for a fourth term in power.

A court on Wednesday found a spokesman for presidential candidate Andrei Sannikov, who is himself detained pending trial, guilty of taking part in mass disturbances and sent him to prison for four years.

Two other opposition activists were given jail terms of three and 3 1/2 years after being found guilty of the same offense.

Their defense had argued that there was no evidence to support the charges.

On Feb. 17, Vasily Parfenkov, a Belarussian who was campaign manager for another candidate who ran against Lukashenko, became the first of more than 30 people to be tried for taking part in the disturbances. He was convicted and sentenced to four years in prison.

The crackdown on protesters prompted new sanctions by the United States and the European Union against Lukashenko, including a travel ban on him and top Belarussian officials.

The opposition says the vote was rigged and international monitors deemed the count to have been deeply flawed. Western governments have called for those detained to be released.

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