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Crackdown on Minsk Rally

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MINSK — Belarussian police have attacked hundreds of opposition activists who tried to hold an anti-government rally.

Dozens of the demonstrators were beaten Friday, and the rights group Vesna said at least 50 were detained.

March 25 has long been a traditional day of opposition rallies marking the anniversary of Belarus' short-lived declaration of independence from Russia in 1918. But the government of longtime President Alexander Lukashenko bans the rallies.

Police cordoned off an avenue and square in central Minsk, blaming an alleged bomb threat.

Meanwhile, the Czech Republic granted on Thursday political asylum to Belarussian politician Ales Mikhalevich, who had run against Lukashenko in the December presidential election and was detained in a police crackdown on a Minsk rally against the president.

(AP, Reuters)

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