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Belarus Vote Results ‘Falsified,’ Lukashenko ‘Deranged’ — Russian Lawmaker

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Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. **Kremlin.ru**

Official election results in Belarus showing an overwhelming victory for its longtime ruler were likely falsified, a senior Russian lawmaker has said in a rare stinging rebuke from Alexander Lukashenko’s traditional ally Moscow.

Belarusian election officials announced that Lukashenko won more than 80% of the vote Sunday, a result that triggered ongoing nationwide protests, strikes and clashes with law enforcement officers. His main challenger also claimed victory and called on him to resign but was later pressured into leaving the country.

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“The results that were announced don’t inspire confidence,” Konstantin Zatulin, a member of

Russia's lower house of parliament, the State Duma, told the pro-Kremlin Gazeta.ru news outlet Monday.

Zatulin, who is the deputy head of the Duma's committee on post-Soviet affairs, said the presidential election in Belarus "was accompanied by total falsification and disinformation."

"Saying how many votes Lukashenko won in these circumstances is like reading tea leaves," he told Gazeta.ru.

Meanwhile, other Russian officials including President Vladimir Putin and State Duma speaker Vyacheslav Volodin have congratulated Lukashenko on winning his sixth presidential term. Zatulin's colleague who heads the Duma's post-Soviet affairs committee, Leonid Kalashnikov, urged Lukashenko to crack down "hard" on demonstrators to avoid an overthrow similar to that of Ukraine in 2014.

Zatulin, however, said "it's unlikely that global public opinion will be on Lukashenko's side" and criticized the Russian-led election observation mission for declaring the Belarusian election legitimate.

"The results of these elections show Lukashenko as a man who imposes himself on Belarus without any ideas," Zatulin told Gazeta.ru.

"Lukashenko has exceeded all limits. We don't wish for any discord or 'Maidan' for Belarus, but he's insane. The problem is that the head of Belarus is a deranged person when it comes to power," he said.

The Russian lawmaker's candid remarks appear to contradict the Kremlin's wait-and-see approach to the unrest in Belarus.

Several pro-Kremlin newspapers ran columns in support of anti-Lukashenko protesters, while Russian state-run television largely ignored or played down the demonstrations.

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