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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Belarus State TV Workers Join Anti-Lukashenko Strike

August 17, 2020



The journalists are demanding that the authorities invalidate the Aug. 9 presidential election results, release political prisoners and abolish censorship in the media. **Sergei Grits / AP / TASS**

Belarusian state television and radio workers walked off the job Monday, becoming the latest public employees to support the opposition in calling for new elections after last week's official results showed a landslide victory for strongman President Alexander Lukashenko.

The unprecedented show of resistance comes after several state television presenters resigned last week in protest against the government's harsh crackdown on peaceful opposition demonstrators.

Embed:

> Guess this means that Belarusian state TV is back on strike.
> pic.twitter.com/2qZDQJynyO

— Oliver Carroll (@olliecarroll) August 17, 2020

Around 100 Belteleradio camera operators, directors and recent resignees have gathered outside the broadcaster's headquarters in Minsk, the independent tut.by news outlet reported.

The journalists are demanding that the authorities invalidate the Aug. 9 presidential election results, release political prisoners and abolish censorship in the media.

Belteleradio's Belarus 1 television channel broadcast reruns of Sunday's news for at least two hours during the workers' strike, the Russian state-run TASS news agency reported Monday.

Employees who agreed to meet Belteleradio chairman Ivan Eismont inside the office said he urged their disgruntled colleagues to resign rather than strike, according to tut.by. One of the protesters said Belteleradio employees would continue striking and defy Eismont's calls for them to quit, according to the same report.

Embed:

Протестующие сотрудники Белтелерадиокомпании. Видео: https://t.co/IdvDXJvbq9 pic.twitter.com/6MXU5f7IMf

— МБХ Медиа (@MBKhMedia) August 17, 2020

Around 55 out of Belteleradio's 1,500 employees have signed a petition calling for the nullification of the election results and an end to media censorship, tut.by reported. Belarus' state-owned All-National TV (ONT) and Capital TV (CTV) stations have also declared plans to strike, it added.

Lukashenko's main challenger Svetlana Tikhanovskaya and her supporters dispute his claim of an 80% victory in the Aug. 9 vote. Thousands took to the streets of the capital Minsk and other cities over the past week to protest the election results, including more than 100,000 who gathered Sunday.

State broadcasters, a major source of news in Belarus' tightly controlled media environment, had initially aired footage of last week's violent crackdown on the election protests to blame demonstrators and warn people not to participate.

Belarus 1 covered anti-Lukashenko protests on Sunday for the first time since the disputed election after previously characterizing them as "riots."

Lukashenko defied calls to step down at a rally in his support earlier that day.

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