

# Belarus Vote Challenger Tikhanovskaya Says Ready to Be 'National Leader'

By [AFP](#)

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Svetlana Tikhanovskaya. **Tatyana Zenkovich / EPA / TASS**

The main challenger in Belarus's disputed presidential election said Monday that she was ready to take over the country's leadership after a wave of protests against President Alexander Lukashenko.

"I did not want to be a politician. But fate decreed that I'd find myself on the frontline of a confrontation against arbitrary rule and injustice," Svetlana Tikhanovskaya said in a new video from exile in Lithuania.

## Embed:

"I am ready to take responsibility and act as a national leader during this period."

The video was released after tens of thousands took to the streets of Minsk on Sunday for the

biggest demonstration yet in the protests against Lukashenko's claim to have won the Aug. 9 election with 80% of the vote.

Tikhanovskaya, a 37-year-old political novice who ran after other potential candidates including her husband were jailed, accuses Lukashenko of rigging the election and has called for a new vote.

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Since leaving for neighboring Lithuania last week, under pressure from the government according to her allies, she has been calling for demonstrations and justice for a brutal police crackdown on protesters.

She has also demanded Lukashenko step down, but it was unclear if she was willing to take on the post of president.

In Monday's video she said she would do so "in order for the country to calm down... so that we release all political prisoners and as soon as possible prepare the legal framework and conditions for organising new presidential elections."

Original url: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/08/17/tikhanovskaya-a71168>