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Belarus State News Circulates Misleading Anti-Opposition Video

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Michal Cizek / AFP

Belarusian state-owned news agency Belta has circulated a video on social media slamming protests against President Alexander Lukashenko that uses a 2019 photograph from Spain to depict violence.

The minute-long video set to sinister music calls protesters "bought-out and sold-out scum" and "animals," and includes an image of demonstrators walking in front of street fires at night that actually shows Catalan independence protests.

Thousands of Belarusians have taken to the streets over the past week to challenge the results of an Aug. 9 presidential election declaring Lukashenko the winner with 80% of the vote over his main challenger Svetlana Tikhanovskaya.

Though it's not immediately clear who's behind the video, a title card suggests that it was made by a group calling itself the "Patriots of the Republic of Belarus." The Meduza news website notes that a similarly named community of 14 members exists on Russia's VK social

network, though it has not been updated since mid-2019.

Embed:

Belta links to an anonymous political Telegram channel that originally posted the same disparaging video hours earlier, claiming that viewers "can see the other side of 'peaceful protests'" and "what won't make it into the foreign media." The same channel previously posted a video of Tikhanovskaya urging supporters not to protest, apparently reading from a script, before she fled Belarus for Lithuania.

Tikhanovskaya, a 37-year-old political novice, ran for office in place of her jailed husband, popular blogger Sergei Tikhanovsky.

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