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Nobel Laureate Alexievich Refuses to Answer Belarus Investigators

By AFP

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Svetlana Alexievich was summoned as a witness in a criminal probe into the opposition. **Natalia Fedosenko / TASS**

Belarusian Nobel Prize-winning author Svetlana Alexievich said Wednesday she refused to answer investigators' questions after she was summoned as a witness in a criminal probe into the opposition.

Opponents of President Alexander Lukashenko formed a Coordination Council to oversee a peaceful transition of power after they rejected his claim to have won a sixth term in an Aug. 9 presidential vote.

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Lukashenko dispatched the security services to violently crack down on mass protests against

his re-election and opened a criminal probe into the council, accusing its members of attempting to topple his government.

Alexievich was named a member of the council's presidium but has not attended its sessions.

"I am completely calm. I do not feel guilty. Everything we are doing is legal and necessary," Alexievich told AFP as she arrived at the Investigative Committee's headquarters in Minsk with other members of the presidium.

She left shortly afterwards, saying she had refused to answer questions and that the council's only goal was "to unite society."

Alexievich, who won the Nobel Literature Prize in 2015, is an outspoken critic of Lukashenko and has supported leading opposition figure Svetlana Tikhanovskaya who fled to neighboring Lithuania after claiming victory in the vote.

Another member of the council, former diplomat and culture minister Pavel Latushko, was questioned by investigators for several hours on Tuesday and signed an agreement barring him from discussing the meeting.

Two other members of the presidium were detained earlier this week and sentenced to 10 days in police detention for organizing unauthorized rallies.

The European Union has rejected the results of the election and said it will impose sanctions on between 15 and 20 people it believes are responsible for election fraud and cracking down on peaceful protesters.

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