The Moscow Times
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Belarus Detains 300 Protesters and Journalists Amid Ongoing Protests

August 28, 2020



Belarusians have taken to the streets every day since the country's disputed Aug. 9 vote. **Dmitri Lovetsky / AP / TASS**

Authorities in Belarus detained at least 260 protesters and 17 journalists Thursday evening, human rights activists said as opposition rallies continued more than two weeks after the country's disputed election.

Belarusians have taken to the streets every day since the Aug. 9 vote in which President Alexander Lukashenko claimed a landslide victory. The days immediately following the vote saw a violent police crackdown with hundreds of demonstrators injured.

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Belarus' Vesna human rights group listed at least 263 names on its website of protesters who were detained on Thursday while taking part in demonstrations in central Minsk.

A separate list names 17 journalists, including four from international news agencies Reuters and The Associated Press, who had planned to cover the scheduled protests. AFP reported that they were taken to a police station for "identity checks."

"They began releasing the journalists after 9 p.m. after forcing them to delete photos on their phones and cameras. Those who refuse are being kept at the station," Vesna said.

BBC Moscow correspondent Steve Rosenberg said in a tweet that he and his crew were also detained for "document checks" Thursday evening.

"A clear attempt to interfere with coverage of events in Belarus," Rosenberg tweeted.

The arrests came hours after Russian President Vladimir Putin said he had formed a reserve group of law enforcement officers ready to be deployed in Belarus if "the situation gets out of control."

Following Putin's statement, NATO urged Russia to stay out of the crisis, while Belarus' western neighbor Poland said Russian intervention would breach international law.

The Belarusian opposition's coordination council, which was created to oversee the peaceful transition of power to opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, said it was unacceptable to form military units outside Belarus for use inside the country.

"Previously, the current president has repeatedly stated that foreign interference in Belarusian affairs was unacceptable," it said in a statement.

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