The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Baltic States Ban Belarus Leader Over Election Fraud, Violence

August 31, 2020

Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko. **Yaugen Yerchak / EPA / TASS**

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on Monday blacklisted embattled Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and 29 other high-ranking officials over alleged election fraud and a crackdown on pro-democracy protesters.

The Baltic EU members announced their sanctions in a coordinated effort to support the protests in Belarus, which are now entering a fourth week since the country's disputed presidential election on August 9.

"We are sending the message that we need to do more than just issue statements, we must also take concrete action," Lithuania's Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius told AFP.

Lukashenko aside, the national blacklists also feature 29 officials including from the election commission, ministries and law-enforcement bodies. Linkevicius said the lists may be expanded in the near future.

His Estonian counterpart Urmas Reinsalu said the Baltic states were "demonstrating that we are addressing the human rights violations in Belarus with utmost seriousness".

The European Union is also mulling travel bans and asset freezes on around 20 Belarus officials but the list requires the approval of all 27 EU states.

Some Western EU members say sanctioning Lukashenko could hamper efforts to broker dialogue between the authorities and the opposition and push him into Russia's arms.

Formerly occupied by the Soviet Union, the Baltic states are all now in the eurozone. Latvia and Lithuania have borders with Belarus.

Lithuania, which has taken a lead in European diplomacy on Belarus, is giving refuge to Belarusian opposition challenger Svetlana Tikhanovskaya.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/08/31/baltic-states-ban-belarus-leader-over-election-fraud-violence-a71298