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Belarus Opposition Leader Urges Sanctions in UN Address

Svetlana Tikhanovskaya spoke to the UN Security Council on Friday by video link.

By AFP

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Opposition candidate Svetlana Tikhanovskaya was detained after the contested vote and fled to Lithuania. **STR / EPA**

Belarus opposition challenger Svetlana Tikhanovskaya on Friday appealed for help from the United Nations and called for sanctions against those responsible for alleged electoral fraud and rights violations in her ex-Soviet country.

Addressing a meeting of the UN Security Council by video link, Tikhanovskaya said the global body should urgently send a mission to Minsk.

"Today my country is in turmoil. Peaceful protesters are being illegally detained, beaten and imprisoned," said Tikhanovskaya, 37.

"We ask the UN to send immediately a monitoring mission to Belarus to document the situation on the ground," Tikhanovskaya, an English teacher by training, said in English.

Tikhanovskaya said Belarus strongman Alexander Lukashenko's regime was "morally bankrupt" and the international community should help put an end to "cynical disregard for human dignity in the middle of Europe."

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She urged the West to introduce sanctions against those who "committed electoral violations and crimes against humanity."

The informal meeting was organised at the request of Estonia, currently a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

Unprecedented protests broke out in Belarus after Lukashenko, who has ruled the ex-Soviet state for 26 years, claimed re-election with 80% of the vote in an election on August 9.

Tikhanovskaya insists she won the poll but the Belarus strongman has refused to quit and turned to Russia for support.

Tikhanovskaya left the country under pressure from the authorities and was granted refuge in EU member Lithuania.

More than 100,000 people have flooded the streets of Minsk for three straight weekends to demand Lukashenko's resignation and a new demonstration is expected on Sunday.

During the first days of post-election protests, Lukashenko's security forces detained thousands of protesters, many of whom accused police of beatings and torture.

Several protesters have died.

This week six Belarusian journalists were detained for covering student protests. On Friday, a court found them guilty of taking part in an illegal rally and sentenced them to three days in jail.

The journalists were released having already spent that long in detention.

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