

Detained Belarus Opposition Leader Says She Was Threatened With 'Dismemberment'

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Maria Kolesnikova, 38, faces up to five years in prison on charges of attempting to seize power. **Natalia Fedosenko / TASS**

Maria Kolesnikova, the last member of a trio of women opposition leaders remaining in Belarus, alleged Thursday that security forces threatened her life as she was being detained on charges of attempting to seize power.

Kolesnikova went missing Monday after witnesses described seeing masked men forcing her into a minibus in central Minsk. Investigators confirmed after 48 hours of silence that Kolesnikova and another senior member of the Belarusian opposition's Coordination Council, a body created to ensure a peaceful transfer of power, had been detained.

Related article: [Belarus Jails Opposition Figure Kolesnikova as Nobel Winner Intimidated](#)

Kolesnikova filed a complaint with investigators detailing her abduction and threats as President Alexander Lukashenko [urged](#) “stronger” measures against members of the Coordination Council.

“These people made threats to take my life, which I perceived as real,” Kolesnikova wrote in the complaint, which was published on the website of a jailed presidential hopeful whose campaign she had run.

“In particular, they said I would still be taken out of Belarus alive or in pieces if I didn’t voluntarily leave,” she added.

Kolesnikova identified the individuals who threatened her as employees of the Belarusian KGB and the interior ministry’s anti-corruption and organized crime unit.

Kolesnikova, 38, faces up to five years in prison on the charges as Lukashenko’s regime ramps up a crackdown on post-election protests. In the complaint to investigators, she said she had been threatened with a 25-year jail term.

Kolesnikova was detained at the Ukrainian border Tuesday after she tore up her passport and jumped out of a car, preventing the authorities from expelling her from Belarus.

Unprecedented demonstrations broke out after Lukashenko claimed to have defeated political novice Svetlana Tikhanovskaya and won his sixth term with 80% of the vote in the Aug. 9 ballot.

Lukashenko has refused to step down and turned to Russia for support to stay in power, while his security services have arrested thousands of protesters. Several people have died.

AFP contributed reporting.

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