

Gorbachev Backs Belarus Opposition Protesters

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The ex-Soviet leader commented on the anti-Lukashenko movement in an interview Thursday. **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

Mikhail Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union, voiced his support for the Belarusian opposition Thursday as the country continues to see mass protests against long-serving strongman Alexander Lukashenko.

His statement came the day after Lukashenko was sworn into office in a secret ceremony following more than a month of unprecedented protests against his disputed re-election on Aug. 9.

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“I respect the Republic [of Belarus] and love the Belarusian people...They have now shown their true strong character — that’s very good,” Gorbachev, 89, said in an [interview](#) with the Podyom media outlet.

The ex-Soviet leader said that he is closely following the developments in Belarus and described the mass [arrests](#) of protesters on the day of Lukashenko's secret inauguration as "devilish."

Gorbachev voiced hope that protesters' efforts will be rewarded, but acknowledged that there is still a lot of work left to do.

"There is a colossal amount of work ahead... All of it is for the current youth to take on."

The European Union, United States and Ukraine have [said](#) they recognize neither the Aug. 9 presidential election results nor Lukashenko's inauguration.

In turn, Lukashenko has been publicly backed by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

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