The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Nobel Winner Alexievich Leaves Belarus for Treatment – Friend

By AFP

September 28, 2020



Svetlana Alexievich, 72, was previously summoned for questioning by investigators after joining the opposition's Coordination Council. **Tatyana Zenkovich / EPA / TASS**

Belarusian writer Svetlana Alexievich has left the country for treatment in Germany, her friend told AFP Monday, after the Nobel Literature Prize winner faced official pressure for supporting the opposition.

The 72-year-old author, who has been summoned for questioning by investigators after joining the opposition's Coordination Council, has gone to Germany for planned treatment, her friend Mariya Voiteshonok told AFP.

Related article: Unknown People Try to Enter Belarus Nobel Laureate Alexievich's Apartment Amid Opposition Arrests

"She will return to Belarus in a month. She is not dropping her activities as a Coordination Council member," Voiteshonok said.

She added that Alexievich also planned to visit Italy where she has been awarded a literary prize.

The announcement of her departure comes as President Alexander Lukashenko has jailed or forced out most of the country's prominent opposition activists.

Known for her Russian-language books with witness accounts of the Soviet era, including World War II and the Chernobyl disaster, Alexievich has always publicly opposed Lukashenko.

When she won the Nobel Literature Prize in 2015, her books were not even published in Belarus.

She has played a symbolic role as an opposition figure, not attending Coordination Council meetings.

She refused to testify to investigators who summoned her for questioning as a witness after opening a criminal probe into the opposition's alleged attempt to seize power.

Earlier this month, she complained of intimidation after unidentified men gathered outside her block of flats and rang her door bell. Diplomats from several European countries joined her in her flat as a gesture of support.

Her assistant, Tatiana Tyurina, told Belarusian independent news site Tut.by that the writer's departure was not linked to the criminal case.

Asked if Alexievich was emigrating, Tyurina said: "No, of course not. She went off to deal with her personal and literary business."

Several members of the Coordination Council are in prison awaiting trial after being charged in the probe.

Lukashenko held a secret inauguration ceremony after claiming 80% of the vote in Aug. 9 elections, despite a huge wave of public support for the main opposition contender, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, who has fled to Lithuania.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/09/28/nobel-winner-alexievich-leaves-belarus-for-treatment-friend-a71578