

Putin Says Belarus Facing 'Unprecedented External Pressure'

By [AFP](#)

September 29, 2020



Putin has promised to provide Lukashenko with security assistance if the political crisis worsens and gave Belarus a loan of \$1.5 billion. [Kremlin.ru](#)

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday that neighboring Belarus was under unprecedented external pressure, as the Kremlin's ex-Soviet ally faces a deep political crisis over a disputed election.

Belarus is in a "difficult situation" and facing "unprecedented external pressure," Putin said in televised remarks, after a presidential vote last month sparked ongoing protests against authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko.

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Protesters have taken to the streets of Belarusian cities since Lukashenko claimed a sixth term

with 80% of the vote in the Aug. 9 election.

Putin has promised to provide the 66-year-old strongman with security assistance if the political crisis worsens and gave Belarus a loan of \$1.5 billion.

Lukashenko has accused various Western countries and NATO of attempting to destabilize his country or support the protest movement.

Addressing a forum on the Belarusian and Russian regions, the Kremlin chief said that Moscow was ready to stand by Minsk, describing ties as "timeless and all-weather."

Lukashenko's relationship with Putin was strained ahead of the vote last month with Minsk accusing Russia of dispatching mercenaries to plot unrest with the opposition.

Putin has long been pushing for even closer integration between the two countries, whose "union state" alliance guarantees close military and economic ties.

European leaders have refused to recognize Lukashenko's relection and have promised sanctions on Belarus for vote rigging and a fierce crackdown on post-election protests.

Exiled opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya who claimed victory over Lukashenko in the August vote has rallied Western support for demonstrators since fleeing to neighboring Lithuania.

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