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Belarus Opposition Leader Calls on U.S. to Isolate Lukashenko

By AFP

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Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, who says she won the vote, fled abroad after state authorities arrested hundreds of people taking part in mass protests and sentenced many to lengthy jail terms. **EPA / TASS**

Belarus' exiled opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya called on the U.S. Thursday to impose more sanctions so as to isolate President Alexander Lukashenko, whose election win Washington considers fraudulent.

"I urge you, the elected representatives of American people, to continue acting decisively. We call on the U.S. to engage in international mediation jointly with European partners," Tikhanovskaya said in a virtual appearance at a congressional hearing.

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She also called on the U.S. to "use its diplomacy to further isolate Lukashenko and to

underscore that his point of political return has been past."

The Belarusian strongman claimed victory for a sixth term in August elections that were widely criticized internationally and by the opposition as fraudulent.

Tikhanovskaya, 38, who says she won the vote, fled abroad after state authorities arrested hundreds of people taking part in mass protests and sentenced many to lengthy jail terms. She lives in Lithuania now.

The U.S. slapped sanctions on nine state-owned companies in Belarus in April in response to the government's repression of pro-democracy protests.

Tikhanovskaya hailed those sanctions by the U.S. Treasury Department as "among the most effective measures" but called on the U.S. to punish other entities in her country.

She also urged the U.S. Congress to consider giving more support to civil society organizations in Belarus, as well as independent media outlets and the private sector, as she said the European Union does.

She also said there has been no major conversation among international powers about how to end the nine month old political crisis in her country.

"We call on the U.S. to take an active part in organizing such an international conference, involving a broad range of stakeholders," she said.

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