

U.K. Bans Belarus Airline, Points Finger at Russia

By [AFP](#)

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U.K. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab **Martyn Wheatley / i-Images via ZUMA Press / TASS**

Britain on Monday banned Belarus flag carrier Belavia and said Russia was likely complicit in the forced landing in Minsk of a civilian jet to detain a dissident journalist.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps also said he had told the Civil Aviation Authority to instruct UK aircraft to avoid Belarusian airspace, "in order to keep passengers safe."

Shapps suspended the operating permit of Belavia, which flies daily direct flights from Minsk to London Gatwick, and operates other flights to London Heathrow via Paris in a code-share with Air France.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said he had summoned the Belarusian ambassador in London

to register anger over the "reprehensible" incident and "flagrant breach of international law."

He said London was mulling further sanctions on the regime of strongman Alexander Lukashenko, and the episode involving the Ryanair plane will be raised when Britain hosts G7 leaders at a summit next month.

"In reality we've got a number of levers but let's not pretend they're a silver bullet," he told parliament, noting Britain had already sanctioned nearly 100 individuals linked to the Lukashenko regime since "rigged" elections last year.

Asked if there was evidence linking Lukashenko's allies in Russia to the forced landing and arrest of journalist Roman Protasevich, Raab said: "We don't have any clear details on that."

"But it's very difficult to believe that this kind of action could have been taken without at least the acquiescence of the authorities in Moscow."

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