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EU Imposes New Sanctions on Belarus

By AFP

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Stringer / TASS

The European Union on Thursday imposed sanctions on key sectors of the Belarus economy, ratcheting up pressure on the regime of President Alexander Lukashenko after the forced landing of an airliner.

The new package looks to hit key sources of revenue for the authorities in Minsk by restricting trade in potash fertilizer, petroleum and tobacco products, a statement said.

It limits access for Belarus to the EU's capital markets and bans providing insurance to government and public bodies.

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There is also a prohibition on the sale of technology to Belarus that could be used to intercept phone or internet communications and "dual-use" military equipment that could be used to

crack down on demonstrators.

The economic sanctions are the most sweeping measures imposed against Belarus so far by the EU and come after Lukashenko sparked outrage by intercepting a Ryanair passenger jet in May to arrest dissident journalist Roman Protasevich and his girlfriend Sofia Sapega.

The bloc on Monday added 86 more individuals and entities to a sanctions blacklist over the diversion of the Athens to Vilnius flight and the broader repression of opposition since Lukashenko claimed victory in an election in August deemed fraudulent by the West.

That takes to 166 the number of people — including Lukashenko, two of his sons and a daughter-in-law — put on an asset freeze and visa ban blacklist since the crisis erupted in Belarus.

The U.S., Britain and Canada also joined in with the bloc on Monday by imposing coordinated sanctions on the regime in Belarus.

In addition, the EU last month already banned Belarusian airlines from flying to the bloc and stopped its carriers using Belarusian airspace.

Lukashenko — who has ruled the ex-Soviet state since 1994 — has so far shrugged off Western pressure with the support of key ally Russia.

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