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Belarus Strongman Chops Wood for Europeans 'Freezing to Death'

By AFP

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Belarusian state television

The strongman leader of Belarus and staunch Kremlin ally Alexander Lukashenko appeared on state television Wednesday chopping wood and reassuring viewers he wouldn't let Europe "freeze to death" this winter.

The tongue-in-cheek broadcast comes as European leaders are struggling to source alternative energy sources with supplies from Russia curtailed after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

The jovial-sounding authoritarian appears in the video wearing a tracksuit and body-warmer, bearing down a large axe on blocks from a large pile of previously chopped wood.

"We won't let Europe freeze to death," Lukashenko jokes in the video. "We will help them and maybe, one day, they will help us too."

Embed:

> #Belarus Lukashenka is trying to flirt with the West. In this video, he says while chopping wood: "We'll help Europe not to freeze. Let's help our brothers. Maybe they will help us."
>
> Don't get fooled. He is a dictator who killed and tortured citizens and is complicit in the war pic.twitter.com/NfkBlU12BS
>
> — Hanna Liubakova (@HannaLiubakova) September 14, 2022

Belarus has been hit with a wave of sanctions by the West both for its support for Moscow's military intervention in Ukraine and also for a ferocious post-election crackdown in 2020.

"Europe can't be picky these days (...) what matters is that they stay warm," the moustachioed leader — often dubbed "Europe's last dictator" — says in the video.

Lukashenko is an eccentric leader who routinely makes unusual media appearances: harvesting crops with young women or playing hockey, for example.

During historic protests against his rule in 2020, he was shown circling protesters in a helicopter, brandishing an AK-47 and referring to the demonstrators as "rats."

Belarus, which borders Ukraine and Russia, has supported Moscow in its military operation, lending its territory to Moscow as a base for some of its troops.

Europe, which is heavily dependent on Russian energy supplies, has started painfully unhitching its decades-long dependency on Moscow's fossil fuels.

Energy prices have soared across Europe and European governments have been urging their citizens and companies to lower their energy consumption.

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