

Jailed Belarus Opposition Leader Kolesnikova Hospitalized in Intensive Care, Allies Say

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Maria Kolesnikova at the Peace and Independence March in Minsk in 2020. **Yevgeny Yerchak / Kommersant**

Jailed Belarusian opposition activist Maria Kolesnikova, who helped lead historic pro-democracy protests in her country in 2020, is in intensive care in the hospital, her allies [said](#) Tuesday.

Kolesnikova was sentenced to 11 years in prison in August 2021 for “conspiracy” over her role in the mass protests that erupted before and after Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko claimed a disputed election victory.

Kolesnikova, 40, “is in the ICU of the Gomel Clinical Hospital,” tweeted the press service of fellow jailed opposition figure Viktor Babaryko.

“The cause is unknown,” it said, adding that Kolesnikova first went to the surgery unit before

being sent to intensive care.

The Gomel hospital has not answered phone calls in the 24 hours after news of Kolesnikova's hospitalization first emerged, the press service [said](#) Wednesday.

Babaryko is a one-time presidential hopeful who was jailed for 14 years on fraud charges last year in a case he condemned as politically motivated.

Last week Babaryko's press service said Kolesnikova, who headed his 2020 election campaign before his arrest, had been put in solitary confinement on the grounds of "impolite behavior." It added that her lawyer had been denied access to her.

A former flutist in the Belarusian philharmonic orchestra, Kolesnikova became a symbol of the 2020 protest movement against Lukashenko's claim to a sixth presidential term.

Kolesnikova was part of a trio of women who led historic demonstrations against Lukashenko and was the only one of the three who did not flee the country.

She was arrested and imprisoned following her stunning refusal to be deported from Belarus in which she tore up her passport at the Ukrainian border.

Kolesnikova [received](#) the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize shortly after her conviction.

Western countries have slapped several sets of sanctions on Minsk and Lukashenko, who has heavily relied on support from Moscow to stay in power.

Russia used Belarus as a launching pad for its military operation in neighboring Ukraine on Feb. 24, though the Belarusian army has not officially taken part in fighting on Ukrainian territory.

AFP contributed reporting.

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