

Allies Say Jailed Belarus Opposition Leader 'Getting Better'

By [AFP](#)

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Belarusian opposition activist Maria Kolesnikova. **Ramil Nasibulin / BELTA / TASS**

Jailed Belarusian opposition leader Maria Kolesnikova, who led historic anti-government demonstrations in the ex-Soviet country and was recently hospitalized, is "getting better," her allies said Thursday.

The 40-year-old was part of a trio of women — along with Veronika Tsepkalo and Svetlana Tikhanovskaya — who mobilized large crowds against strongman Alexander Lukashenko in 2020.

She was sentenced to 11 years in prison in 2021 in a trial that her supporters said was punishment for challenging Lukashenko.

Her supporters on Tuesday said she had been admitted to intensive care, but few details of her condition were available.

"According to the doctors, she is getting better," the press service of fellow opposition politician Viktor Babaryko said in a statement on Thursday, citing her father.

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She was transferred to a hospital ward from intensive care, the statement said, adding she had a "normal appetite."

Kolesnikova was operated on but doctors did not inform her father of her diagnosis, the statement said.

It added that a doctor from her penal colony had assured her that the prison would provide "proper conditions and care" after she is discharged.

On Wednesday, Germany called for Kolesnikova's immediate release.

A professional flute player, Kolesnikova spearheaded massive rallies that broke out across Belarus against Lukashenko's claim to a sixth presidential term.

She refused to go into exile and tore up her passport but was ultimately jailed for violating national security and conspiring to seize power.

After the vote, Lukashenko violently dispersed demonstrations and detained thousands of protesters and forced into exile or jailed critical activists and journalists.

Both Tikhanovskaya and Tsepalo live in exile.

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