

Belarus President Lukashenko to Seek Re-Election Next Year

By [AFP](#)

February 25, 2024



Alexander Lukashenko **Maxim Grigoryev/Photobank Roscongress**

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, who has held power since 1994, said on Sunday he intended to seek re-election next year, which could extend his grip on the country to 36 years.

He was speaking on the day Belarus, a neighbor and ally of Russia, held parliamentary elections decried as a sham by the opposition.

"Tell them I will run in the (2025) election," Lukashenko said, according to a social media channel run by his team.

Sunday's ballot is the first nationwide poll since the presidential election of 2020. That vote sparked huge protests against Lukashenko, who is widely believed to have rigged the result to extend his decades-long rule.

The president has since orchestrated a huge crackdown on dissent, jailing hundreds of opponents and forcing thousands into exile.

There are no real opposition candidates in Sunday's parliamentary elections. Lukashenko's exiled opponents have urged Belarusians to stay at home and boycott the vote.

Lukashenko warned the authorities had "learned our lesson" since the 2020 protests and there would be "no rebellions" during Sunday's election.

Last month, Belarus's powerful KGB security service orchestrated a series of raids which rights groups said had targeted the families of political prisoners.

There are currently 1,419 political detainees in Belarus jails, according to leading human rights group Viasna.

Exiled opposition leader Svetlana Tsikhanouskaya posted a video on social media dismissing Sunday's elections.

"Let's be clear: the regime's attempt to use these fake elections to legitimize its power will not be successful," Tsikhanouskaya said.

"The people of Belarus see through this sham," she said, urging the international community not to recognize the outcome of the ballot.

Lukashenko has thrown his closed east European country into even deeper isolation since he allowed Russia to use Belarusian territory to launch its Ukraine offensive two years ago.

The Minsk regime relies heavily on Moscow for political and economic support. "We will always be together with Russia," Lukashenko said on Sunday.

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