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Thread: [Lukashenko wins 7th term in Belarus, world cries foul](#)

Hackers - January 26, 2025, 6:36 am

MINSK, Jan 26 (Reuters) - Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko said on Sunday that some of his political opponents had "chosen" to go to prison as he cast his vote in a election that was set to extend his 31-year rule.

Lukashenko, 70, held a long press conference at which he was asked how the vote could be free and fair, given that all the main opposition figures are in jail or have fled the country.

"Some chose prison, some chose 'exile', as you say. We didn't kick anyone out of the country," he said.

Lukashenko said no one was prevented from speaking out in Belarus, but prison was "for people who opened their mouths too wide, to put it bluntly, those who broke the law".

The United States and the European Union have both described Sunday's election as a sham, given the repression of political opponents and the banning of independent media.

"This is a blatant affront to democracy," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said on the eve of the vote. Exiled opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya told Reuters this week that Lukashenko was engineering his re-election as part of a "ritual for dictators".

Lukashenko shrugged off the criticism as meaningless and said it was irrelevant to him whether the West decided to recognise the election or not.

The EU and the US both said they did not recognise him as the legitimate leader of Belarus after he used his security forces to crush mass protests after the last election in 2020, when Western governments backed Tsikhanouskaya's claim that he had falsified the results to cheat her of victory.

Tens of thousands of people were arrested. Human rights group Viasna, which is banned as an "extremist" organisation, says there are still some 1,250 political prisoners.

Lukashenko said he had freed many people, referring to more than 250 pardons he has issued in the past year.

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Asked about the case of leading dissident Maria Kalesnikava, he accused her of "violating the regime" but said she was healthy and invited a BBC correspondent to go and see her in jail.

"In any state you have to take responsibility if you break the law. The law is severe, but it's the law," he said.

Lukashenko, who took his small dog with him to a Minsk polling station, is standing against four other candidates. None has mounted any serious challenge or criticism.

While there is no doubt about the outcome, he faces tricky choices in a new five-year term, which will be his seventh since 1994.

The war in Ukraine has bound him more tightly than ever to Russian President Vladimir Putin, with Lukashenko offering his country as a launchpad for the 2022 invasion and later agreeing to let Moscow place tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus.

As possible peace talks loom, political analysts say Lukashenko is using the prisoner releases in a bid to start mending ties with West and secure gains for himself and Belarus if the conflict comes to an end.

Tsikhanouskaya told Reuters this week that Lukashenko was playing a game with the West. "We need to stop repressions, we need to release all prisoners and maybe then we will talk to you," she said.

Cooligan - January 26, 2025, 7:38 am

There is no "winning" or "losing" when it comes to Presidential elections in Belarus, there's only "retaining". Lukashenko will be in office until he dies. He made that clear decades ago.

He has been dubbed "the last European dictator" for a very long time now.

Hackers - January 26, 2025, 10:13 am

(Jan 26, 2025 08:38 AM)Cooligan Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) There is no "winning" or "losing" when it comes to Presidential elections in Belarus, there's only "retaining". Lukashenko will be in office until he dies. He made that clear decades ago.

He has been dubbed "the last European dictator" for a very long time now.

Yes, that's the problem

Usually in free & fair elections, there is a winner, and losers. But everyone knows there was no actual vote. It's a rigged game there.

This is another reason Belarus should be liberated one day. The people deserve freedom from Luka and Putin.