



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Belarus Genocide Warning August 2021

Genocide Watch is issuing an Emergency Warning for Belarus due to continuing political violence by President Alexander Lukashenko's regime. Lukashenko became President in 1994. He changed the constitution to remove term limits. He has been Belarus' President ever since.

Although exit polls showed he lost, Lukashenko claimed victory in the elections of 2020. This led to [mass protests](#) and international condemnation of the election. Since then, over [35,000 people have been jailed or tortured](#). Thousands have become refugees in neighboring states.

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Lukashenko's 2020 opponent, fled to Poland and is in exile. She warns that Lukashenko is becoming "[more cruel and harsh](#)" since the election. His regime is supported by Vladimir Putin's government in Russia. While crackdowns on Lukashenko's opponents are not new, this past year's violent detentions and torture are the worst ever.

[Roman Protasevich](#), a prominent Belarusian journalist and activist, fled to Lithuania in 2019 to continue his opposition efforts. While aboard a Ryanair flight traveling from Athens to Vilnius, Belarusian air traffic controllers forced his plane to land in Minsk, inventing a bomb threat. Upon landing, [Protasevich and Sofia Sapega](#), were arrested by police. International leaders condemned this "[state-sponsored hijacking](#)". Protasevich and Sapega are currently held under [house arrest](#) in Minsk while awaiting trial. They could face 15 years in prison.

Belarusian sprinter Krystsina Tsimanouskaya sought refuge in [Poland](#) when her coaches tried to force her to leave the Tokyo Olympics and return to Belarus. Tsimanouskaya had publicly complained that her coaches had entered her in an event [without her knowledge or approval](#).

Lukashenko's son, Viktor, is the president of the Belarus Olympic Committee. Tsimanouskaya feared for her safety and refused to board the plane to Belarus. Poland offered her a humanitarian visa on August 2nd, and Tsimanouskaya announced her [defection](#) on August 5th.

Vasily Shishov, head of the Belarusian House in Ukraine, was found by police hanged in a [park](#) near his house in Kyiv on August 3rd. He was a prominent Belarusian who was assisting refugees from Belarus. Many experts believe that Lukashenko ordered the assassination.

Genocide Watch considers Belarus to be at **Stage 8: Persecution**.

Genocide Watch recommends that the U.S., Canada, U.K. and E.U. should:

- Impose the Global Magnitsky Act sanctions against all Belarusian officials responsible for torture and violence against protesters.
- Demand release of all opposition leaders and protestors who are in jail or prison.
- Demand Lukashenko's resignation, followed by fair elections.
- Neighboring countries like Poland, Ukraine, and Lithuania should continue to give refuge and support to Belarusian émigrés in their activism against Lukashenko's regime.