

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0805

August 31, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write to express our deep concern over the conduct of the August 9 presidential election in Belarus that was rigged in favor of Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled the country for 26 years and is often called Europe's last dictator. Hundreds of thousands of outraged citizens have gathered around the country to publicly denounce the fraudulent election, and they have been met by violent security forces employing rubber bullets, stun grenades, water cannons, and in at least one incident live ammunition. More than 7,000 Belarusians have been detained so far, with scores hospitalized and two reported deaths at the hands of police. Main opposition candidate Svyatlana Tskihanouskaya was forced to flee to neighboring Lithuania after alleged threats to her young children.

Following an August 15 phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Lukashenko announced that in the framework of the Union State and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, they had agreed that "at the first request there will be comprehensive assistance provided to ensure the security of the Republic of Belarus." Kremlin-controlled journalists have publicly called for Russia's "polite men," a euphemism for the unmarked special forces that appeared in Crimea before its so-called annexation and in eastern Ukraine, to be dispatched to Belarus. While Lukashenko has in the past striven to balance the West, and more recently China, against Russia to achieve a modicum of independence, the deployment of Russian forces into Belarusian cities and towns would destroy the vestiges of the country's sovereignty and set back democracy efforts by decades. A Russian operation in Belarus would also place its forces on the borders of NATO members Poland and Lithuania, a position that would threaten our allies in Eastern Europe.

As such, we urge you to cooperate with European partners to induce the Belarusian government to end its assault on democratic values and take all necessary measures to ensure the human rights and fundamental freedoms of its citizens are respected. It is also of paramount importance that you take a strong and public stand against the possibility of further Russian adventurism.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Lindsey O. Graham
United States Senator