

# Protests, Solidarity, Strikes, Coordination Council – Belarus Civil Society Digest

For almost three weeks in a row, Belarusians continue civic resistance opposing Alexander Lukashenka's rule after a disputed election of August 9th and police violence against peaceful protesters.

On Sunday, August 23, like a week ago, a massive rally in Minsk [again gathered](#) up to 250,000 people. When the crowd reached the Palace of Independence, Lukashenka and his younger son appeared there [armed](#) with Kalashnikov assault rifles and wearing tactical vests.

- **The protests and solidarity actions** have continued across the country and covered at least [55 cities](#) (according to police statistics). Reporters and technicians are quitting their jobs at state-owned news companies, including radio Stalitsa's [all staff](#) – Russian media workers are taking up their roles by Lukashenka's [invitation](#). Following the doctors of the National Cardiology Center's pickets, its director, academician and scientist Alexander Mrochek was [fired](#).
- **Strikes.** Pressure on the strike committees at state enterprises continues, including persuasion, intimidation, [arrests](#), and forced emigration. In response, workers hold [protest marches](#) and go on an "[Italian strike](#)". The Belarus Solidarity Foundation has collected [\\$1,8 million](#) for protesting enterprises. Polish Solidarity union sent [food convoy](#) for striking workers but it was denied entry to Belarus.

- **Economic hardship.** Over 150 economists from 25 countries [appeal](#) to Belarusian authorities warning about catastrophic economic hardship in the case of further abuse of human and economic rights. The Belarusian ruble continues to fall (8%-10% for a week). Banks [suspend](#) lending. Dozens of IT companies [relocate](#) their offices from the country.
- **Civil society** continues monitoring and reporting human rights violations and provides legal, humanitarian, and financial aid to victims of repression. The By\_Help crowdfunding campaign is close to [\\$3 million](#) of donations. [Gender Perspectives](#) suspends joint activities with the police in view of its cruelty exercised toward protesters. [Lawtrend](#) launches a campaign to oppose compulsory membership in pro-state CSOs. CET is studying public opinion [Street Voice](#) directly during the protests.
- **Coordination Council** as a “representative body of the Belarusian society” [calls on](#) a million supporters to join its expanded membership to restore justice and the rule of law in the country. Meanwhile, under criminal case over power transition, several members of the Council, including Nobel Laureate [Svetlana Alexievich](#) were summoned; two members were [arrested](#) for 10 days each.
- **Repressions.** Police [go back to arrests](#) of peaceful protesters and strikers, although without using violence and riot gear, as recorded in the early days of the protests. During one day, August 27, nearly [300 people](#), including [50 journalists](#), were detained in Minsk. The authorities’ reaction comes to extraordinary cases: a woman was detained at work just because she was in a [white-red-white dress](#) (colors of protest). Over 60 protesters face [criminal charges](#), while zero criminal cases have been opened for [450 complaints](#) from

protesters beaten by police.

- **International reaction.** On Sunday, August 23, some 50,000 people formed a [human chain](#) from Vilnius to the Belarusian border to express solidarity with protests in Belarus. The [EU Ambassadors](#) met with the Foreign Minister of Belarus to underline the necessity of a peaceful and democratic process. [U.S. Deputy Secretary of State](#) Stephen Biegun met with the opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya in Vilnius. [OSCE Chairperson-in-Office](#) Edi Rama offers to facilitate dialogue in Belarus. [Ukraine](#) suspends all contacts with the official Minsk. [Putin](#) says he's ready to send forces to Belarus if protests spin 'out of control'.
- **COVID-19.** Over 71,000 Belarusians positively tested for and 667 died [due to COVID-19](#). Daily numbers of infected continue increasing and reached 247 new cases on Wednesday.

*Belarus Digest prepared this overview on the basis of materials provided by Pact. This digest attempts to give a richer picture of the recent political and civil society events in Belarus. It often goes beyond the hot stories already available in English-language media.*