

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 29, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

As advocates for democracy and human rights around the globe, we write to you in solidarity with the people of Belarus in their struggle for truth and justice following their country's fraudulent presidential election last month. Together, we urge you to increase efforts on behalf of the United States to support the Belarusian people and the democratic future of their country.

As you have noted, Belarus's presidential election on August 9, 2020 was neither free nor fair. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights reported that there was "significant administration misconduct," as well as "clear intimidation of political activists in the pre-election period." Multiple candidates were arbitrarily barred from running for office, credible international observers were prevented from observing the election, and the actual election "results" were not tabulated with any level of integrity.

Rather than accept fraudulent results prescribed by a dictator, the Belarusian people took to the streets demanding a democratic process that reflects the will of the people. Peaceful protests, both large and small in scale, have continued daily since the election. Despite their peaceful nature, the protesters have been met with violent crackdowns from security services, arbitrary arrests, information lockdowns, and persecution of civil society, oppression too common under the Soviet-style tyranny of Alexander Lukashenko.

We stand in solidarity with the tens of thousands of brave men and women across Belarus who are demanding democracy. Their commitment to a more just and democratic future for their country inspires. We also express our support for the journalists covering the demonstrations, many of whom have been harassed, attacked, or even imprisoned.

In contrast, we strongly condemn the Belarusian authorities' use of violence and oppression against the people of Belarus and call for the immediate release of all political prisoners. Noting that Lukashenko has turned to his ally and enabler, Russian President Vladimir Putin, we also condemn Russia's efforts to increase propaganda, security resources, financial support, and other

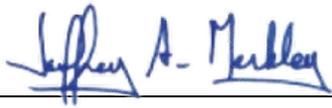
resources that aim to bolster Lukashenko's grip on power and continue oppression of the Belarusian people.

While we note the statements you have released and appreciate Deputy Secretary Biegun's trip to the region to explore all sides, we urge you and the administration to use additional tools to address this human rights crisis. Specifically, we urge the State Department to seek to secure an immediate cessation of violence and crackdowns, the release of all political prisoners (including at least one American citizen that we are aware of), and establish a dialogue to forge a path for free and fair elections with the participation of international observers, goals we believe would be achieved by applying appropriate pressure on the regime in close coordination with our European allies. We urge you to take the following actions:

1. Issue a statement declaring the August 9, 2020 presidential election as falsified and Alexander Lukashenko's victory and subsequent "swearing in" as illegitimate, recognizing the National Coordinating Council, and calling for free, fair, transparent and inclusive new elections to be held in accordance with international standards, under the supervision of independent observers, and at the earliest opportunity.
2. Expedite your review of potential sanctions to address serious human rights violations in Belarus, including sanctions pursuant to the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act and further enhancements of Executive Order 13405 to include the revocation of the General License 2G.
3. As a result of the sanctions review, institute an asset freeze and travel ban applying to all human rights violators in Belarus (and entities controlled by them), including (a) leadership of police and armed forces responsible for violent crackdown on peaceful protesters, (b) members of the Central Election Commission and Precinct Election Commissions with confirmed election violations, and (c) Russian state actors responsible for interference in the democratic process in Belarus.
4. Immediately cease all financial, charitable, and technical assistance to the Government of Belarus as well as impose a strict import ban on products made by state-owned enterprises in order to prevent financing of the repressive apparatus in Belarus. This freeze should include any additional Eurobond issuance by the Government of Belarus.
5. Explore opportunities to provide humanitarian assistance to those who have suffered from recent state repression.

We strongly support the Belarusian people and their commitment to a more democratic future for their country. We thank you for your consideration of decisive action on this matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator