

Non-Paper on Belarus 2025 So-Called Presidential “Election”

Presented by the Democratic Forces of Belarus

Summary

The presidential so-called “election” in Belarus is scheduled for January 26, 2025, six months before when they could be held under the law. The current conditions do not allow for free and fair elections. This will be an exercise in “self-reappointment” of Lukashenka and a staged attempt to legitimize his continued rule without genuine competition. Democratic forces announced a joint strategy towards this “election” - to reject it as a farce, ask people to vote “against all” if they are forced to take part, or just boycott. International community should not recognize this election, continue the policy of pressure and isolation of Lukashenka, support the demand of the Belarusian society for free and fair elections, release of political prisoners and end of repressions.

Why These “Elections” Are a Sham

The election takes place in an atmosphere of fear and repression.

The identities of members of election commissions are classified, and all commissions consist solely of loyalists or those forced to join.

The system doesn’t allow for honest counting of the votes.

There are no provisions for independent observation or parallel vote counting.

All opposition political figures are imprisoned or forced into exile. There are over 1,300 political prisoners.

Current laws prohibit alternative candidates, including Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, from running if they are prosecuted by the regime or live abroad.

Independent media were liquidated, labelled extremist, and accessing them is punishable by law.

Opposition parties, independent unions, and civil society organizations were dismantled.

Voters face intimidation and are pressured to participate.

Those living abroad are stripped of voting rights, despite past practice.

Individuals who observed previous elections or supported opposition candidates face harassment.

The regime has in the past refused to invite international observers, further undermining election credibility.

Lukashenka's Goals

1. Consolidate Power: By organizing early “election”, Lukashenka aims to reinforce his lacking legitimacy both domestically and internationally.

2. Prevent Opposition Mobilization: The early date and winter timing aim to deter public dissent and prevent large-scale protests due to harsh weather conditions.
3. Neutralize Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's Legitimacy: The early election attempts to undermine Tsikhanouskaya by ending her informal political mandate.
4. Improve International Standing: Lukashenka seeks to present this election as "turning the page" after 2020, to cement the status-quo and decrease pressure from the West.

Strategy of Democratic Forces

1. Reject the Sham Elections: Belarusian society should not recognize this "election", labelling the process as a fraud and a futile attempt to legitimize dictatorship.
2. Expose the Farce: Efforts will be made to expose the lack of democratic conditions, documenting and publicizing the regime's human rights violations.
3. Mobilize Belarusians: The strategy will involve encouraging Belarusians to protest against the fake election (by marking "against all" in the ballot) and using creative resistance to challenge the regime's narrative.
4. International Advocacy: Lobbying will continue for stronger international pressure, isolation of the regime, and support for Belarusian society, both inside the country and in exile.
5. Support Political Prisoners: Efforts will focus on advocating for the release of political prisoners and ending repression.

Recommendations for International Partners:

1. Do Not Recognize the 2025 "Elections": The international community should reject the election and treat the process as a sham. This includes refusing to acknowledge Lukashenka's legitimacy. Avoid calling this process an "election" – we propose to call it a "non-election" (in Belarusian *biazvybary/бязвыбары*), "self-appointment", "imitation", "farce".
2. Make clear demands: Call for real, free and fair elections, release of political prisoners and ending repression, insist on accountability for perpetrators, and full withdrawal of Belarus from the Russian war against Ukraine.
3. Increase Pressure on the Regime: Consider human rights sanction package for continuing repressions and electoral fraud. Strengthen existing sanctions, particularly targeting sectors that fund the regime, secondary sanctions, close loopholes.
4. Support Belarusian Democratic Forces: Continue formal engagement and cooperation with the structures of Belarusian democratic forces (OST, UTC, CC) led by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya.
5. Raise Awareness of Human Rights Violations: Amplify the voices of political prisoners and victims of repression. Use international forums to call for accountability and highlight the lack of democratic conditions in Belarus.

6. Prepare for a Post-2025 Scenario: Plan for different scenarios that may arise following the “election”, including increased repression or potential openings for change. Coordinate with Belarusian democratic forces to be ready to support a transition.

7. Focus on Belarusian People, Not the Regime: Engage directly with civil society, students, journalists, and exiled professionals. Promote exchanges, visas, and scholarships to strengthen ties with the Belarusian population and demonstrate that Europe is a viable alternative to the current authoritarian regime.

Conclusion

The 2025 election in Belarus is a pre-arranged show orchestrated by Lukashenka to maintain his grip on power. Democratic forces call for the international community to reject this farce and continue pressing for real democratic change. The regime should not be allowed to "turn the page" without accountability and while continuing massive violations of human rights, and coordinated efforts are needed to keep Belarus on the path towards genuine democracy.