

Belarus opposition rally attracts thousands despite crackdown - August 7, 2020

Thousands of people gathered in a park in the Belarusian capital on August 6 in support of opposition presidential candidate Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya after she had to cancel her campaign event following the city authorities' abrupt decision to replace her rallies in Minsk with government-organized events. The demonstrators then marched across the city, clapping and chanting "Long live Belarus!" and "Go away!" -- an apparent message for incumbent President Alyaksandr Lukashenka, whose 26 years of authoritarian rule looks increasingly vulnerable ahead of the August 9 election.

In a related development, the Central Election Commission said on August 6 that turnout during three days of early voting was 22.47 percent of the country's 6.8 million eligible voters.

Opposition politicians, rights activists, and critics of Lukashenka have called on citizens to refrain from early voting, which started on August 4, charging that it gives Lukashenka loyalists more opportunities to rig the election results.