

Artists Deface Minsk Mural Celebrating Russia-Belarus Friendship

October 24, 2016



Signal Project / Facebook

A giant mural on the side of a high-rise residential building in the Belarussian capital of Minsk has been defaced by local street artists, the tut.by news website reported Monday.

A Belarussian street artist collective named Signal added barbed wire to the little boy's (symbolizing Minsk) bouquet of wild flowers and the girl's (representing Moscow) flower crown. The original mural, intended to celebrate the friendship between the two capitals of brotherly nations, was commissioned by Moscow's mayor office and donated to Minsk by a Russian artist earlier this year, but ignited mixed reactions from locals.

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The author of the subsequent addition of barbed wire, told tut.by anonymously that "Our

relationship is potentially rocky — a fact we are trying to hide behind cornflowers and daisies. "Let's just call my artwork a fact of life that's becoming increasingly difficult to hide."

The Minsk authorities have not yet intervened to restore the mural. Russia and Belarus are both founding members of the Eurasian Customs Union and cooperate closely. But tensions flare up periodically and Moscow has been known to exercise punitive economic measures against the increasingly assertive Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko. In 2009, the so-called 'Milk War' erupted between Russia and Belarus, a major exporter of dairy products to Russia, when Lukashenko accused Russia of trying to bribe him with a \$500 million loan in exchange for recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia — disputed territories in Georgia.

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