

Gorbachev Backs Belarus Opposition Protesters

September 25, 2020



The ex-Soviet leader commented on the anti-Lukashenko movement in an interview Thursday. **Sergei** Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency

Mikhail Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union, voiced his support for the Belarusian opposition Thursday as the country continues to see mass protests against long-serving strongman Alexander Lukashenko.

His statement came the day after Lukashenko was sworn into office in a secret ceremony following more than a month of unprecedented protests against his disputed re-election on Aug. 9.

Related article: Secret Lukashenko Inauguration Triggers Fresh Belarus Clashes

"I respect the Republic [of Belarus] and love the Belarusian people...They have now shown their true strong character — that's very good," Gorbachev, 89, said in an <u>interview</u> with the Podyom media outlet. The ex-Soviet leader said that he is closely following the developments in Belarus and described the mass <u>arrests</u> of protesters on the day of Lukashenko's secret inauguration as "devilish."

Gorbachev voiced hope that protesters' efforts will be rewarded, but acknowledged that there is still a lot of work left to do.

"There is a colossal amount of work ahead... All of it is for the current youth to take on."

The European Union, United States and Ukraine have <u>said</u> they recognize neither the Aug. 9 presidential election results nor Lukashenko's inauguration.

In turn, Lukashenko has been publicly backed by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

Original url:

https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/09/25/gorbachev-backs-belarus-opposition-protesters-a7154 7