

Exiled Critic Urges Belarus to Be 'Prepared' Amid Leader Health Rumors

By [AFP](#)

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Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko. president.gov.by

The exiled opposition leader of reclusive Belarus on Monday called on the public to be "prepared" for political change following reports speculating on the declining health of strongman Alexander Lukashenko.

The 68-year-old who has been in power since 1994 has not been seen in public for six days, skipping important events.

He was last seen in Moscow for celebrations of the Soviet victory over the Nazis, but he had skipped a lunch hosted by his ally President Vladimir Putin.

Some Russian and Belarusian journalists commented that Lukashenko appeared unwell at the Red Square military parade.

His rival, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, who fled to neighboring Lithuania after 2020 mass

protests against Lukashenko, [commented](#) on the health "rumors" on Twitter.

"For us, it means only one thing: we should be well prepared for every scenario," she said.

"To turn Belarus on the path to democracy and prevent Russia from interfering," she added.

"We need the international community to be proactive and fast."

In a break from tradition, Lukashenko also did not address Belarusian war veterans on May 9.

Officials have not commented on his absence from public life.

Last year, Lukashenko allowed Russia to use Belarusian territory as a launchpad for its offensive on Ukraine.

In 2020, the former collective farm boss claimed to have won a sixth term in an election that spurred hundreds of thousands of Belarusians to the streets in protest.

His regime crushed the unprecedented protest movement, jailing or pushing into exile most dissenters.

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