



STATEMENT

Conservatives Call on the Liberal Government to Stand Up for Democracy in Europe and Take Action on the Situation in Belarus

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ottawa – The Honourable Michael Chong, Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, today issued the following statement on the situation in Belarus:

“Conservatives remain deeply concerned about the situation in Belarus. Since early August, hundreds of thousands of Belarusians have taken to the streets to protest the fraudulent election of President Alexander Lukashenko and have been met with police violence, mass arrests and torture.

“Canada has a direct interest in Eastern Europe. There are some 900 Canadian Armed Forces members deployed in Central and Eastern Europe serving on Operation Reassurance, part of NATO assurance and deterrence measures. It is Canada’s largest current international military operation.

“We stand with the people of Belarus against the fraudulent election of Alexander Lukashenko. We support an independent international investigation into the election results and the suppression of peaceful protestors by Belarusian security forces.

“We call on the Liberal government to reinstate economic sanctions on Belarus. In 2006, the Canadian government imposed economic sanctions on Belarus for human rights abuses. These sanctions were lifted in 2016. The Liberal government should also use the *Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act* (Sergei Magnitsky Law) against some 20 key figures in the Belarusian regime who are complicit in violence, oppression and election fraud, as EU foreign ministers have called for.

“If it has not already done so, the Liberal government should summon the chargé d'affaires for Belarus to formally express Canada’s serious concerns about the fraudulent election and violent crackdown on peaceful protestors. We also call on the Liberal government to direct the Canadian Ambassador to Poland to visit Svetlana Alexievich to show solidarity with her, as European diplomats did earlier this month on September 9th. Alexievich is the last remaining member of the opposition Coordination Council in Belarus who has not been detained.

“Democracies around the world are under threat. Canada must stand up for democracy in Europe and stand with the people of Belarus. The time to act is now.”

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