



# HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS FOR FREE ELECTIONS

## **Elections\*2025. Analytical report**

### **on the results of monitoring the nomination and registration of candidates**

*The expert election\* 2025<sup>1</sup> observation mission was organized by the Belarusian Helsinki Committee and the Viasna Human Rights Center as part of the "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections" campaign. The mission collects and analyzes information about the election campaign based on open sources and messages from voters from Belarus.*

## **CONCLUSIONS**

- There remains a repressive climate of threat, fear-mongering, pressure, and persecution in connection with any civil activity unauthorized by the state. "Preventive conversations" and repeated detentions of people who were active during the previous presidential campaign in 2020 are combined with a demonstration of readiness to harshly suppress any manifestations of disloyalty in this election campaign. This climate of fear negatively affects the chances of "healthy" voter behavior — knowing the repressive consequences of putting signatures in support of candidates other than Aliaksandr Lukashenka in 2020, voters do not want to take the risk of signing in support of anyone in 2024;

- Applications for registration of initiative groups for the nomination of presidential candidates were submitted by 11 people (55 in 2020). The Central Election Commission (CEC) refused to register the initiative groups of Dziyana Kavalioua (due to the insufficient number of members of the initiative group), Aliaksandr Drazdou, and Viktor Kulesh (due to non-compliance with the requirements for the list of members of the initiative group), Yury Hubarevich (due to sending documents by e-mail, which is not explicitly allowed by electoral legislation).

- The CEC has registered 7 initiative groups nominating presidential candidates — Aliaksandr Lukashenka (the current president), Aleh Haidukevich (chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus), Aliaksandr Khizhniak (chairman of the Republican Party of Labor and Justice), Volha Chamadanava (head of the main department of Ideological Work and Youth Affairs of the Minsk City Executive Committee), Hanna Kanapatskaya (individual entrepreneur), Siarhei Bobrykau (chairman of the Republican Council of the public association Belarusian Union of Officers), Siarhei Syrankou (first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus). Later it was announced that V. Chamadanava and S. Bobrykau filed applications for the termination of the work of their initiative groups. None of these candidates came forward as a clear alternative to A. Lukashenka. Rather, they have been planned to act as "sparring partners" who should provide a formal alternative in the ballot.

- Local authorities have slightly expanded the list of places where the collection of signatures of voters in support of the nomination of presidential candidates is prohibited, while there has been some diversity in the interpretation of the Electoral Code. However, given that the elections provide no real alternative and the voter activity is low, reducing the number of signature collection sites did not provoke a reaction from the candidates: no initiative groups complained about problems collecting signatures.

- The preservation in the legislation of the permission to collect signatures on the territories of enterprises and institutions has strengthened the mechanism of administrative coercion to sign in support of A. Lukashenka and, at the same time, in some cases, A. Khizhniak and probably other

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<sup>1</sup> The term "elections\*" in relation to the 2025 election campaign is used with an asterisk by the "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections" campaign to emphasize the perfunctory nature of this term, since any free and fair election campaign presupposes, first of all, conditions where rights and freedoms are fully realized, including freedom of speech, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, the right to participate in the governance of one's state, freedom from discrimination, which is currently practically absent in Belarus.

"sparring partners". Signature collectors often did not present documents; information for signature lists was provided by the personnel departments of state institutions and state-owned enterprises.

- Thus, the collection of signatures took place with serious violations of the standards of free and democratic elections, in a climate of intimidation and coercion. De facto authorities took active measures to prevent any potential civil activity unauthorized by the state. The process of collecting signatures excluded equality of candidates and was aimed at creating a picture of support for only one candidate, A. Lukashenka, with the traditional use of administrative resources and forcing voters to sign in support of his nomination as a candidate. This stage is the most transparent for the executive vertical, when all the signatures and the refusal to sign may become grounds for politically motivated prosecution.

- The territorial election commissions confirmed the collection of the required 100,000 signatures by all five candidates. As before, signature verification took place in an opaque manner and in a very short time, which raises reasonable doubts about the figures' validity.

- Already at this stage, part of a de facto campaigning designed to legitimize the idea of broad voter support for A. Lukashenka is a record-high number of declared signatures and the difference between the allegedly collected signatures in his support (more than 2.5 million signatures, about 35% of all voters) and signatures collected by other candidates (in the range of 112–134 thousand). A special role was assigned to state and pro-government media resources, especially regional newspapers, which essentially focused on campaigning for A. Lukashenka.

- The CEC registered candidates and issued registration certificates to 5 applicants: Aleh Haidukevich, Anna Kanapatskaya, Aliaksandr Lukashenka, Siarhei Syrankou, Aliaksandr Khizhniak on the very next day after the start of the registration stage, i. e. this is the fastest registration in the history of presidential elections.

## I. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The nomination and registration of candidates are regulated by Chapter 15 of the Electoral Code and clarified by CEC Resolution No. 70<sup>2</sup>.

### *Nominating candidates*

The nomination of a candidate for president of the Republic of Belarus is carried out by collecting signatures of at least 100,000 voters. Signatures are collected by an initiative group of at least 100 voters; the initiative group must be registered by the CEC. Article 61 of the Electoral Code establishes the requirements for the documents that must be provided for the registration of an initiative group and the documents that must be presented by a person who intends to run for president. It is important to pay attention once again to the changes introduced by the "constitutional reform" to the requirements imposed, in particular, on presidential candidates:

- the age limit has been raised: the candidate must be "at least 40 years old" instead of 35;
- the residency requirement has been raised: permanent residence in the Republic of Belarus *has to be at least 20 years immediately* before the elections instead of 10 years in the previous version of the norm;
- a citizen who has or previously had the citizenship of a foreign state or a residence permit or other document of a foreign state granting the right to benefits and other advantages cannot be elected president<sup>3</sup>.

The documents can be submitted to the CEC either personally by a citizen who intends to be nominated as a presidential candidate, or by their representative based on a certified power of attorney. As part of this campaign, the documents for the registration of the initiative group must have been submitted to the CEC no later than November 1, 2024.

The CEC considers the application within five days from the date of its receipt, registers the initiative group, and issues certificates and signature lists to its members to collect signatures of

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<sup>2</sup> Resolution of the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Belarus No. 70 dated October 24, 2024: <https://www.rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/post70-2025.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> See Article 57 of the Electoral Code as amended by the Law of 02/16/2023 No. 252-3.

voters. The CEC may refuse to register an initiative group in case of violation of the Electoral Code; in addition, the CEC may revoke the decision to register an initiative group without prior warning in case of repeated violations by its members of the requirements of the Electoral Code, if a warning has already been issued.

Refusal to register an initiative group or cancellation of the decision on its registration may be appealed to the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus within three days from the date of the relevant decision by a person who intends to run as a candidate for President of the Republic of Belarus. The appeal is reviewed within three days. The decision to register an initiative group may also be revoked based on an application from a person nominated as a presidential candidate.

### *Collecting signatures*

The collection of signatures of voters in support of persons proposed for the nomination of presidential candidates within the framework of the analyzed campaign was carried out from November 7, 2024, to December 6, 2024, inclusive. When collecting signatures, a member of the initiative group must present to the voters a certificate issued by the CEC and a document with a photo confirming their identity. Signatures in the signature lists should be put by citizens of the Republic of Belarus who have reached the age of 18 and have the right to vote.

The signature list must contain signatures of voters residing in the territory of only one district, a city of regional subordination without a district division, and in cities with a district division — one district in the city. A voter has the right to sign in support of several candidates proposed for the presidential nomination, but only once in support of the same candidate. Voters have the right to withdraw their signatures before submitting the signature lists to the relevant commission by contacting the latter with an application.

Signatures can be collected by picketing. Obtaining a permit for picketing for these purposes is not required if it is held in places that are not prohibited by the local executive and administrative authorities. *The participation of the organization's administration in the collection of signatures, as well as coercion in the process of collecting signatures and remuneration of voters for making signatures, are not allowed.* Violation of these requirements may be grounds for refusal of registration or cancellation of the decision to register a presidential candidate.

### *Registration of candidates*

Within the framework of this campaign, following the requirements of the Electoral Code and the electoral calendar established by the CEC, candidate registration was to be carried out from December 22 to December 31, 2024. Article 68 of the Electoral Code contains, among other things, requirements for documents that a potential candidate must submit to the CEC before registration begins, including a declaration of income and property of the person nominated as a candidate, their spouse, and adult close relatives living with them and running a common household, as well as a financial report about the expenditure of the election fund.

The CEC checks the compliance of the procedure for nominating candidates with the requirements of the Electoral Code and the accuracy of the information in the documents submitted for registration. The person nominated as a presidential candidate is entitled to review the verification materials.

The decision to register a candidate is made, among other things, in the presence of reports of the regional and Minsk city commissions for the presidential election, confirming the presence of at least 100,000 signatures of voters on the nomination of a candidate for president of the Republic of Belarus. Article 68-1 of the Electoral Code establishes, among others, the following *grounds for refusal* to register a candidate for President of the Republic of Belarus:

- non-compliance of the person nominated by the candidate with the candidate requirements of the Code;
- a person nominated as a candidate for President of the Republic of Belarus having a court verdict against them that has entered into legal force;
- non-compliance with the requirements stipulated by the Electoral Code for the nomination of a candidate;
- failure to submit one or more documents required for candidate registration;

- insufficient number of valid signatures of voters in support of this candidate for registration of the candidate;
- the use of funds or other material assistance from foreign states and organizations, foreign citizens and stateless persons, international organizations, organizations whose founders (participants, owners of property) are foreign states, foreign organizations, international organizations, foreign citizens and stateless persons to get elected;
- the presence of more than 15 percent of invalid signatures in the signature lists from the total number of verified signatures of voters;

The CEC has the *right to refuse* to register a candidate for President of the Republic of Belarus, in the case of:

- submission of significant information that does not correspond to reality in the declaration of income and property of a person nominated as a presidential candidate;
- using the advantages of their official position to get elected;
- the participation of the organization's administration in collecting signatures of voters, coercion in the process of collecting signatures, and remuneration of voters for making signatures;
- exceeding by more than 20 percent of the maximum amount of expenditure of election funds by a person nominated as a presidential candidate;
- a repeated violation by a person nominated as a candidate for President of the Republic of Belarus or an initiative group of the requirements of the Electoral Code and other acts of election legislation, if they had previously been warned.

The decision of the CEC to refuse registration as a presidential candidate may be appealed to the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus by the person nominated as a candidate within three days from the date of the decision. The court reviews the appeal within three days, and its decision is final.

The electoral legislation formally separates the stages of signature collection and campaigning: following Article 45 of the Electoral Code, "pre-election campaigning of a candidate <...> starts 25 days before the election." Thus, the campaigning events can only start from January 1, 2025.

## II. REGISTRATION OF INITIATIVE GROUPS

In the shortest possible time, the election\* date was announced on October 24, 2024. Accordingly, no later than November 1, 2024,<sup>4</sup> documents for registration of initiative groups for the nomination of presidential candidates (hereinafter referred to as initiative groups) had to be filed. On October 25, the CEC press service announced<sup>5</sup> that documents will be accepted from October 24 to November 1. Such deadlines make it almost impossible for real political actors to engage in natural political activity, especially given that the election date expected considering the constitutional terms of office was supposed to be in the summer of 2025.

Nevertheless, according to the CEC reports, the documents on the registration of initiative groups were filed by:

October 26 (one day after the election was announced\*) — de facto president Aliaksandr Lukashenka;<sup>6</sup>

October 30 — head of the main department of the Minsk City Executive Committee, former press secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Volha Chamadanava;<sup>7</sup> chairman of the Republican Party of Labor and Justice Aliaksandr Khizhniak;<sup>8</sup> chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus Aleh Haidukevich;<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> CEC, Calendar plan of organizational events for the preparation and conduct of the presidential elections of the Republic of Belarus on January 26, 2025: <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/kalendar2025.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2805>

<sup>6</sup> <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2810>

<sup>7</sup> <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2830>

<sup>8</sup> <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2828>

<sup>9</sup> <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2827>

October 31 — first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus Siarhei Syrankou,<sup>10</sup> Dzyiana Kavaliova,<sup>11</sup> chairman of the Republican Council of the public association Belarusian Union of Officers Siarhei Bobrykau,<sup>12</sup> deputy of the House of Representatives of the fifth convocation and candidate for president in 2020 Hanna Kanapatskaya;<sup>13</sup>

November 1 — Viktor Kulesh.<sup>14</sup>

Potential presidential candidates are either representatives of three of the four pro-government parties remaining after the 2023 re-registration, which have no real influence in the social and political life of the country, or do not have any public background at all, such as Aliaksandr Drazdou and Viktor Kulesh, who have no public information about them available at the time of registration of the initiative group,<sup>15</sup> or Dzyiana Kavaliova, the first public information about whom appeared on the day of filing the documents for registration of the initiative group with a brief description of the candidate as an "entrepreneur from Mahilioŭ".<sup>16</sup>

Also, judging by the decisions to refuse registration,<sup>17</sup> the documents were filed by Aliaksandr Drazdou and Yury Hubarevich, the head of the For Freedom movement, a political public association deprived of registration in Belarus, who is in forced exile due to politically motivated persecution<sup>18</sup>.

On October 29, the CEC press service announced the registration of Aliaksandr Lukashenka's initiative group.<sup>19</sup> On October 31,<sup>20</sup> that is, the day after the documents were submitted, the registration of the initiative groups of Aleh Haidukevich, Aliaksandr Khizhniak, and Volha Chamadanava was announced. November 4<sup>21</sup> — the registration of the initiative groups of Hanna Kanapatskaya, Siarhei Bobrykau, and Siarhei Syrankou.

The decision to refuse registration was made<sup>22</sup> in relation to three potential candidates without a public background: Viktor Kulesh, since only an application was submitted without a list of members of the initiative group,<sup>23</sup> Dzyiana Kavaliova, due to the insufficient number of members of the initiative group,<sup>24</sup> and Aliaksandr Drazdou, due to the failure to submit a list of members of the initiative group<sup>25</sup> — that is, for failure to comply with simple formal requirements for the documents

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<sup>10</sup> <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2837>

<sup>11</sup> <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2834>

<sup>12</sup> <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2833>

<sup>13</sup> <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2832>

<sup>14</sup> <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2841>

<sup>15</sup> Belsat, 7 "candidates for candidates" for president. Who are they?, 10/31/2024,

<https://ru.belsat.eu/83266068/7-kandidatov-v-kandidaty-v-prezidenty-kto-oni>

<sup>16</sup> BelTA, The CEC has refused to register Dzyiana Kavaliova's initiative group for the nomination of a presidential candidate, 11/04/2024,

<https://belta.by/society/view/tsik-otkazal-v-registratsii-initsiativnoj-gruppe-diany-kovalevoj-dlja-vydvizhenija-kandidatom-v-673181-2024/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2817?single>

<sup>18</sup> Viasna, The Case of the Coordinating Council is a new attack on the civil society of Belarus, 12/04/2023,

<https://spring96.org/en/news/113444>

<sup>19</sup> <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2817>

<sup>20</sup> <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2836>

<sup>21</sup> <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2845>

<sup>22</sup> <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2845>,

<https://t.me/cikbelarus/2817?single>

<sup>23</sup> BelTA, The CEC has refused to register Viktor Kulesh's initiative group for the nomination of a presidential candidate, 11/04/2024,

<https://belta.by/society/view/tsik-otkazal-v-registratsii-initsiativnoj-gruppe-diany-kovalevoj-dlja-vydvizhenija-kandidatom-v-673181-2024/>

<sup>24</sup> BelTA, The CEC has refused to register Dzyiana Kavaliova's initiative group for the nomination of a presidential candidate, 11/04/2024,

<https://belta.by/society/view/tsik-otkazal-v-registratsii-initsiativnoj-gruppe-diany-kovalevoj-dlja-vydvizhenija-kandidatom-v-673181-2024/>

<sup>25</sup> BelTA, "Lack of seriousness in intentions." The CEC explained the reason for the refusal to register two initiative groups, 10/29/2024,

<https://belta.by/society/view/n eserjeznost-namerenij-tsik-objjasnil-prichinu-otkaza-v-registratsii-dvuh-initsiativnyh-grupp-671767-2024/>



provided. And concerning Yury Hubarevich — due to sending documents by e-mail, which is not stipulated in the electoral legislation.<sup>26</sup>

According to the CEC, Volha Chamadanava and Siarhei Bobrykau have submitted applications for the termination of their initiative groups,<sup>27</sup> both expressing support<sup>28</sup> for de facto president Aliaksandr Lukashenka, while there is no decision on the registration of their initiative groups on the CEC website.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, out of 7 registered, 5 initiative groups continued their work. None of these candidates came forward as a clear alternative to A. Lukashenka. Rather, they have been planned to act as "sparring partners" who should provide a formal alternative in the ballot.

### III. COLLECTING SIGNATURES

The signature collection stage took place from November 7 to December 6, 2024.<sup>30</sup> Registered initiative groups needed to collect at least 100,000 signatures<sup>31</sup>.

By November 4, local executive and administrative authorities had identified places prohibited for picketing to collect signatures from voters. Among them are the most frequently visited, popular, and significant places: the central squares of cities, main streets, passenger boarding points at public transport stops, car parks, and parking lots. It is prohibited to collect signatures near the presidential residence, buildings and structures where organizations that serve as media outlets are located, as well as radio and television transmitting and broadcasting stations — no closer than 200 meters; schools, universities, hospitals, and government buildings — no closer than 50 meters<sup>32</sup>.

At the same time, no activity on the streets of the country's settlements corresponding to the number of signatures collected was observed visually, which is confirmed by data from independent information sources<sup>33</sup>. The picture of popular support for one candidate, A. Lukashenka, who was shown by state and pro-government media, judging by reports of coercion, was often imitated by involving groups of students and labor collectives of state institutions and state-owned enterprises.

A significant role at the stage of collecting signatures was assigned to state and pro-government media, and especially to regional newspapers. Often, coverage of the signature collection was limited<sup>34</sup> to the publication of comments from voters with a positive assessment, mainly of candidate A. Lukashenka or by posting an illustration with the slogan of his election campaign

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> <https://t.me/cikbelarus/2883>

<sup>28</sup> BelTA, *Volha Chamadanava is no longer participating in the presidential election campaign*, 11/12/2024, <https://belta.by/society/view/olga-chemodanova-bolshe-ne-uchastvuet-v-elektoralnoj-kampanii-po-vyboram-prezidenta-674853-2024/>

"We understand perfectly well that no one except our President Aliaksandr Ryhoravich Lukashenka will be able to ensure the security we are in today."

BelTA, *Siarhei Bobrykau has decided to stop participating in the presidential election campaign*, 11/12/2024, <https://belta.by/society/view/sergej-bobrikov-prinjal-reshenie-prekratit-uchastie-v-elektoralnoj-kampanii-po-vyboram-prezidenta-674794-2024/>

"In order to ensure the cohesion of the officer corps, to prevent ambivalence among the military, and to support the current head of state and our leader, I made this decision."

<sup>29</sup> CEC, Election of the President of the Republic of Belarus / Resolutions:

<https://rec.gov.by/ru/election-schedule-ru/view/elections-2025-president>

<sup>30</sup> CEC, Calendar plan: <https://rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/kalendar2025.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> In accordance with Article 60 of the Electoral Code of the Republic of Belarus

<sup>32</sup> For example, see Appendix to the decision of the Minsk City Executive Committee No. 158 dated 10/31/2024:

[https://minsk.gov.by/ru/freepage/other/vybory\\_2025/perechen\\_mest\\_zapreshenih\\_dlya\\_sbora\\_podpisei.pdf](https://minsk.gov.by/ru/freepage/other/vybory_2025/perechen_mest_zapreshenih_dlya_sbora_podpisei.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections, *"Everything goes quietly and unnoticeably." On the election campaign in Maladzečna, Viliejka, Valožyn, Miadzel*, 12/05/2024, <https://elections2025.spring96.org/ru/news/116876>

<sup>34</sup> Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections, *How the collection of signatures for the elections\* took place in Brest region*, 12/06/2024, <https://elections2025.spring96.org/ru/news/116894>

“Needs to be done!”<sup>35</sup>, while other candidates were hardly mentioned<sup>36</sup>. Journalists loyal to the government focused on showing crowds at signature collection spots and nationwide support for candidate A. Lukashenka<sup>37</sup>, which is a form of campaigning that is not formally allowed at this stage of the election process.

Along with the beginning of the signature collection stage, government officials, administrations of institutions and enterprises, and state-dependent public structures have intensified intimidation and threats of administrative and criminal penalties for participating in mass events not authorized by the state. Preventive measures designed to deter any alternative civic activity, including meetings, were carried out by the prosecutor's office for employees of enterprises<sup>38</sup>, by school administrators for parents<sup>39</sup>, by deputies and chairpersons of primary organizations of the BRSM (The Belarusian Republican Youth Union) for students.

The signature collection process has traditionally been conducted **with the help of the administrative resource**. The management of state organizations held meetings of labor collectives during working hours, forcing them to sign in support of A. Lukashenka<sup>40</sup>, there are also cases of forced collection of signatures for the nomination of A. Khizhniak as a candidate<sup>41</sup>. Some state media covered the process of collecting signatures, noting that the initiative groups of candidate A. Lukashenka were invited by the very collectives<sup>42</sup>.

The collection of signatures at workplaces is known, in particular, from Rečyca, where the collection of signatures began 2 days earlier than the deadline, and the head of one of the Rečyca enterprises had to collect 360 signatures<sup>43</sup>. In schools in Rahačoŭ and Svetlahorsk, there were cases when teachers were called to the principal and forced to sign two lists at the same time<sup>44</sup>.

There are reports of widespread concerns about signing in support of any candidates other than A. Lukashenka, taking into account the repressive consequences of such signatures in 2020.

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<sup>35</sup> Zerkalo, *The authorities have launched a flash mob: employees of government organizations and the military are forced to ask Lukashenka to run for a 7th term*, 10/28/2024, <https://news.zerkalo.io/cellar/81933.html>  
"The authorities in Belarus have launched a flash mob where various government organizations and agencies publish videos where employees allegedly ask Aliaksandr Lukashenka to participate in the presidential elections in 2025. The videos have been posted on Telegram channels and social media of various ministries and state-owned enterprises.

All the videos follow the same scenario: first, an excerpt of Lukashenka's interview with Russian propagandist Olga Skabeyeva is shown where she asks if he will participate in the 2025 elections, to which he replies: if his supporters say that it is necessary. After that, the people in the video say: "It's necessary."

<sup>36</sup> Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections, *Because he is backed by the people.* "How a Minsk region newspaper campaigns for Lukashenka", 12/05/2024, <https://elections2025.spring96.org/ru/news/116867>

<sup>37</sup> Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections, *Staged shots, campaigning at school: how the Brest region collected signatures for the elections\**, 12/06/2024, <https://elections2025.spring96.org/ru/news/116894>

<sup>38</sup> Mahilioŭ Viasna, *Kanstantsin Liavitski, Deputy Head of the Investigation Supervision Department of the Mahilioŭ Region Prosecutor's Office, held a meeting with the staff of the Bialyničy Central District Hospital*: <https://t.me/MAYDAYMog/4663>

<sup>39</sup> Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections, *Before the elections\**, *parents of Minsk schoolchildren are intimidated by responsibility for participating in "mass events"*, 12/18/2024, <https://elections2025.spring96.org/ru/news/116980>

<sup>40</sup> Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections, *"Everything goes quietly and unnoticeably." On the election campaign in Maladzečna, Viliejka, Valožyn, Miadzel'*, 12/05/2024, <https://elections2025.spring96.org/ru/news/116876>

<sup>41</sup> Viasna, *"Those who refuse to sign are added to the list." How does the collection of signatures happen in Homel region*, 12/03/2024, <https://spring96.org/ru/news/116836>

<sup>42</sup> Polacki Vestnik, *Collection of signatures in support of the nomination of presidential candidates continues in Polack region*, 11/20/2024, <https://www.pvestnik.by/na-polotchine-prodolzhaetsya-sbor-podpisej-v-podderzhku-vydvizheniya-kandidatov-v-prezidenty/>

<sup>43</sup> Homiel Viasna, *In Rečyca, signatures began to be collected ahead of schedule for the nomination of Lukashenka as a presidential candidate*, 11/06/2024, <https://gomelspring.org/be/news/11008>

<sup>44</sup> Viasna, *"Those who refuse to sign are added to the list." How does the collection of signatures happen in Homel region*, 12/03/2024, <https://spring96.org/ru/news/116836>

The collection of signatures by the administrations of organizations was accompanied by pressure on voters, including through intimidation<sup>45</sup> <sup>46</sup>. It is reported that part of the pickets to collect signatures for A. Lukashenka was accompanied by police officers. This stage is the most transparent for the executive vertical, when all the signatures and the refusal to sign may become grounds for politically motivated prosecution.

In violation of the Electoral Code<sup>47</sup>, numerous facts of campaigning for candidate A. Lukashenka were observed. For example, at the same time as collecting signatures, campaign events were held in state institutions under the guise of discussing the upcoming elections, where special attention was paid to the politics of one candidate, A. Lukashenka. Such events took place in schools<sup>48</sup>, labor collectives<sup>49</sup>, educational institutions,<sup>50</sup> or for students during extracurricular activities dedicated to the personality of A. Lukashenka<sup>51</sup>. Some of the local newspapers<sup>52</sup> also campaigned for A. Lukashenka when covering the signature collection stage, posting illustrations from his election campaign and ignoring other candidates. Local authorities, covering the process of collecting signatures, focused on the campaign of A. Lukashenka, even though they must remain neutral<sup>53</sup>. Visual images with the slogan "Needs to be done!", which refers to the campaign of A. Lukashenka, were visible on the streets and in state media.

Another form of using the administrative resource is informing by the official presidential press service about the number of signatures collected<sup>54</sup>.

There is at least one known case of criminal prosecution for criticizing A. Lukashenka as a candidate during the collection of signatures. On December 20, 2024, the Leninski District Court of Minsk found Andrei Kunitski guilty of committing a crime under Article 368 of the Criminal Code "insulting the President of the Republic of Belarus" and sentenced him to one and a half years of imprisonment in a high-security penal colony.

The signature collection stage ended on December 6. From the moment of delivery of the signature lists, the calendar plan allows 10 days for verification of the authenticity of signatures by district, city, and district election commissions in cities. No later than December 16, the reports on establishing the number of signatures were to be submitted to the regional and Minsk city commissions, which were to submit the reports to the CEC within 5 days, but no later than December 21.

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<sup>45</sup> Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections, *Without a signature in support of Lukashenka "one will have big troubles." How does the collection of signatures happen in Viciebsk region*, 12/03/2024, <https://elections2025.spring96.org/ru/news/116849>

<sup>46</sup> Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections, *"Elections\* 2025 are not free elections": Belarusians are under pressure during signature collection*, 11/19/2024, <https://elections2025.spring96.org/ru/news/116724>

<sup>47</sup> See Article 45 of the Electoral Code of the Republic of Belarus: The pre-election campaigning of a candidate for President of the Republic of Belarus, for deputies begins 25 days before the election <...>

<sup>48</sup> Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections, *Staged shots, campaigning at school: how the Brest region collected signatures for the elections\**, 12/06/2024, <https://elections2025.spring96.org/ru/news/116894>  
"In Kamianiec, officials came to discuss the elections even to the secondary school. Aksana Vysohrotskaya, chairwoman of the local district Council of Deputies, told the pupils about the election campaign and the work of initiative groups in the Kamianiec district. Of course, she spoke in approval of Lukashenka's policy."

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

"Campaigning is also carried out among the labor collectives of the Ivanava region. Officials from various fields report to their teams on how wonderful it is to live in the country now."

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

"The youth of the Ivanava region were shown a propaganda film *Creative Belarus* by Belteleradiocompany during the election campaign.

<sup>51</sup> Human rights defenders for free elections, *People in Mahilioŭ region are persuaded to sign in support of Lukashenka and they are afraid of responsibility for "oppositional" sentiments*, 12/05/2024, <https://elections2025.spring96.org/ru/news/116873>

<sup>52</sup> Human rights defenders for free elections, *Staged shots, campaigning at school: how the Brest region collected signatures for the elections\**, 12/06/2024, <https://elections2025.spring96.org/ru/news/116894>

<sup>53</sup> Viasna, *"Everything goes quietly and unnoticeably." On the election campaign in Maladzečna, Viliejka, Valožyn, Miadzeļ*, 12/05/2024, <https://spring96.org/ru/news/116876>

<sup>54</sup> [https://t.me/pul\\_1/14455](https://t.me/pul_1/14455)



On December 23, the CEC announced<sup>55</sup> the number of signatures left in support of the candidates.

Presidential candidate	Number of signatures
Aleh Haidukevich	134,472
Hanna Kanapatskaya	121,077
Aliaksandr Lukashenka	2,518,145
Siarhei Syrankou	125,577
Aliaksandr Khizhniak	112,779

The stated amount of signatures collected in support of A. Lukashenka is a record for all 7 presidential election campaigns: in 2020 there were 1,939,572, in 2015 — 1,761,145, in 2010 — 1,110,149, in 2006 — 1,905,631. Administrative coercion made it possible to organize a demonstration of "support" by about 35% of voters.

Thus, the signature collection stage took place in conditions where voters did not have the opportunity to freely discuss candidates, as well as independently decide whether to put their signature for the nomination of a candidate without fear of punishment. Representatives of the de facto authorities took active measures to prevent any potential civil activity unauthorized by the state.

The process of collecting signatures excluded equality of candidates and was aimed at creating a picture of support for only one candidate, A. Lukashenka, with the traditional use of administrative resources and forcing voters to sign in support of his nomination as a candidate. At the same time, some attention was paid to "sparring partners" who should provide a formal alternative in the ballot. A special role was assigned to the pro-government media, especially the regional newspapers, which essentially focused on campaigning for A. Lukashenka.

#### IV. REGISTRATION OF CANDIDATES

According to the Calendar plan<sup>56</sup>, the registration of presidential candidates should take place from December 22 to December 31 inclusive. Within two days after registration, presidential candidates are given certificates of registration.

On December 23<sup>57</sup>, that is, the day after the start of registration, at the CEC meeting, all candidates were registered and issued registration certificates. According to information posted on the CEC website, this is the fastest registration in the history of presidential elections since 2006<sup>58</sup>.

<sup>55</sup> <https://t.me/cikbelarus/3039>

<sup>56</sup> CEC, Calendar Plan, page 5 <https://www.rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/kalendar2025.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> CEC, Notification on registration of candidates for President of the Republic of Belarus <https://www.rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/info-reg.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> There is no information about the period of registration of presidential candidates before 2006. Registration period:

- in 2006 — February 12–02, 2006 <https://www.rec.gov.by/uploads/folderForLinks/archive-elections-prb2006-kalend.pdf>. Registration — 02/17/2006 <https://www.rec.gov.by/uploads/folderForLinks/archive-elections-prb2006-soob10.pdf>
- in 2010 — November 14–23, 2010 <https://www.rec.gov.by/uploads/folderForLinks/elections-prb-kalend-pl.pdf>. Registration — 11/18/2010 <https://www.rec.gov.by/uploads/folderForLinks/elections-prb-soob5.pdf>
- in 2015 — September 6–15, 2015 <https://www.rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/elections-prb2015-kalend.pdf>. Registration — 09/10/2015 <https://www.rec.gov.by/uploads/folderForLinks/elections-prb2015-soob1.pdf>
- in 2020 — July 5–14, 2020 <https://www.rec.gov.by/files/2020/post12.pdf>. Registration — 07/14/2020 <https://www.rec.gov.by/files/2020/inf3.pdf>

<b>Election year</b>	<b>Time for the decision on registration (days)</b>
2006	5
2010	4
2015	4
2020	9
2024	1

Based on the results of reviewing the reports of the chairpersons of the regional and Minsk city election commissions, the CEC established the total number of signatures<sup>59</sup> of voters that were recognized as valid. The process, as before, was not transparent, and took place in the absence of independent observers and in a very short time, which raises reasonable doubts about the validity of the figures.

Based on the results of collecting signatures and studying the documents submitted by all potential candidates: V. Haidukevich, A. Kanapatkaya, A. Lukashenka, S. Syrankou, A. Khizhniak, the CEC concluded that these individuals meet all the requirements, and registered them as candidates.

#### **V. APPEAL**

There is no information about attempts to appeal any aspects of this stage of the election campaign.

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<sup>59</sup> The CEC, Information on the establishment of the number of voters who signed in support of the nomination of a candidate for President of the Republic of Belarus <https://www.rec.gov.by/uploads/files/Calendar/stat13.pdf>