

Briefing on

## Parliamentary Elections in Belarus

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73.1%

voter turnout

4

running political entities

110

seats in the  
House of Representatives

### About the elections

On 25 February 2024, the Belarusian authorities held a “single voting day” for the first time following the amendment of the Constitution of Belarus in 2022. It was also the first election since 2020. On this day, both the lower house of Parliament (the House of Representatives) and the local Councils of Deputies were elected. Subsequently, a new body, the All-Belarusian People’s Assembly, will in turn be appointed by the newly elected regional and national authorities. The assembly will contain 1,200 delegates but power will primarily lie with its leadership committee (or “praesidium”) – a group of up to 15 people – and ultimately with Lukashenko, who as the body’s chair will be tasked with appointing them.

The election campaign period kicked off in Belarus on 31 January and ran until 24 February. Campaigning was prohibited on the single voting day itself.

Voters in Minsk received two ballots (one for the deputies of the House of Representatives and one for the Minsk City Council of Deputies); voters in regional and district centres received three ballots (for the deputies of the House of Representatives, the regional Council of Deputies, as well as the city or district Council of Deputies); and those in rural areas

a minimum of four ballots (for the deputies of the House of Representatives, the regional Council of Deputies, the district Council of Deputies, as well as the rural or settlement Council of Deputies). There might even have been cases where there were five or six ballots, if the polling station covered two or three rural districts.

### In the shadow of repression

The 2024 elections were organized against the backdrop of a deep socio-political crisis lasting for over three years, which intensified during the presidential election campaign in 2020 with further repressions against civil society and the subsequent falsification of election results. Mass spontaneous peaceful protests ensued. In response, the authorities began to forcibly disperse protests, conduct mass detentions, and torture protesters. The investigative authorities began to institute criminal cases against participants of peaceful protests, accusing them of group actions grossly violating public order or of participating in mass riots.

The criminal prosecution for political reasons that was practiced throughout the authoritarian period intensified during the 2020 presidential elections, persists at a repressive level to this day, and will continue in the foreseeable future. The initiation of criminal cases for political reasons is the primary method of suppressing any activity disapproved by the government.

The administrative and criminal proceedings do not adhere to the standards of fair judicial procedure, while punishment in politically motivated cases involves the use of torture and cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment. The authorities not only fail to protect against torture but systematically employ it themselves.

Freedom of speech and expression in Belarus is absent, not only at the individual level but also within the country's media sector. Since 2020, widespread methods of pressure on the media and journalists have included the criminal prosecution of journalists, the obstruction of media activities by law enforcement agencies, the exploitation of legislation on countering extremism to restrict the influence of independent media, and administrative measures to limit access to information.

## No democratic election

Since the 2020 presidential elections, the authorities have already conducted another nationwide campaign: a referendum on amending the Constitution, held on 27 February 2022. This occurred under conditions of systemic and widespread human rights violations, a legal crisis, increasing authoritarianism, and a tense situation in the region due to the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The preparation and execution of the referendum did not comply with the basic international standards for conducting free and fair electoral campaigns and were accompanied by numerous violations; the voting was characterised as non-transparent, lacking the participation of independent observers.

By the time the 2024 elections were announced, the authorities had created an atmosphere of total fear, supported by administrative arbitrariness. Over the three years since the 2020 presidential elections, the regime has systematically constricted the socio-political space, leaving no room for healthy political discourse or genuine political competition in the electoral campaign. Any existing legal means of protection remain ineffective, even in light of reports of torture; there are no guarantees of judicial independence or predictability in law enforcement practice. With restrictions on freedom of speech, assembly and association, no respect for the freedom of the media, and no redress against these violations, it is impossible to speak of the 2024 elections as free, fair and democratic.

## Constitutional amendments and electoral changes

The revisions to the Constitution, enacted during the referendum on 27 February 2022, brought about significant changes to the structure of central government bodies. Under the new constitutional framework, the All-Belarusian People's Assembly assumes the role of the highest representative body of the Republic of Belarus, despite not being directly elected by the people. At the same time, the Parliament becomes a representative and legislative body. A part of the Parliament's powers is transferred to the Assembly. Notably, there are grounds for significant control over the Assembly by the current president, which has the potential to weaken the Parliament and render the already vulnerable system of checks and balances completely dysfunctional. In the new system, the elections of deputies of the lower house of Parliament largely become a preparation for the formation of the Assembly.

The amendments to regulations of the activities of public associations, which include stricter requirements for the re-registration of political parties and worsen the conditions for other public associations, have led to a significant overhaul of the

Belarusian political landscape and the non-profit sector. Out of the 15 registered parties authorised to nominate candidates for deputies, only four remain. Additionally, the number of public associations whose representatives can serve as observers, participate in election commission activities, and be members of the All-Belarusian People's Assembly, is decreasing. It is noteworthy that the revised Constitution also strips public associations of the right to nominate candidates for deputies, reserving this privilege solely for political parties, labour collectives, and citizens.

The existing regulations do not support truly general elections. It is worth noting as a positive development that detainees have active suffrage in accordance with the new version of the Constitution. However, the removal of provisions from the Electoral Code that governed voting outside the Republic of Belarus indicates the legislative entrenchment of illegal practices that occurred in 2022, depriving Belarusians abroad of the opportunity to participate in a referendum. In practice, citizens currently residing abroad cannot engage in Belarusian electoral events if they face the threat of persecution on return to the country.

## Running political entities

According to the results of the re-registration initiated by the Belarusian authorities, only four parties remained. The "cleansing" of the political field in Belarus took place throughout the year 2023. During this period, the United Civil Party, the Conservative Christian Party of the Belarusian People's Front, the Belarusian Popular Front Party, the Belarusian Green Party, and the Belarusian Social Democratic Assembly were liquidated. The Supreme Court also dissolved two more pro-government parties: the Republican Party and the Social Democratic Party of Popular Accord.

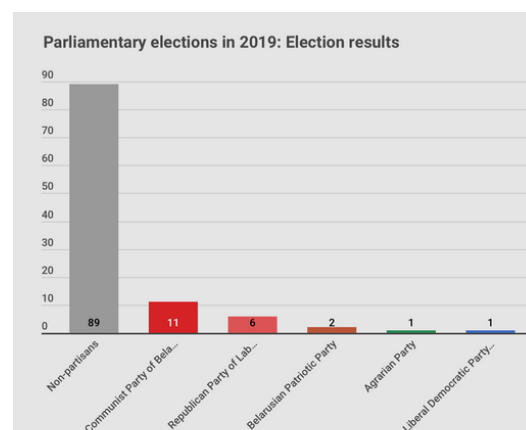
According to the Central Election Commission of Belarus, 265 candidates competed for 110 seats in the House of Representatives.

The candidates' list for the House of Representatives included 112 members of the Belaya Rus Party, 33 members of the Communist Party of Belarus, 36 members of the Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus, and 22 members of the Republican Labour and Justice Party. The candidates for the local councils of deputies included 5,187 members of the Belaya Rus Party, 700 members of the Communist Party of Belarus, 215 members of the Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus, and 484 members of the Republican Party of Labour and Justice.

According to the Central Election Commission of Belarus, the voter turnout in the 2024 parliamentary and local elections exceeded 73%, reaching almost 77% in some regions. The official results of the parliamentary elections indicate that 51 pro-Lukashenko Belaya Rus party deputies were elected to the House of Representatives, while 40 were formally non-partisan. Additionally, the Republican Party of Labour and Justice received eight seats, the Communist Party received seven, and the Liberal Democratic Party received four.

Pro-democracy forces decided on their tactics for the single voting day in February 2024. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya called on Belarusians not to participate in parliamentary "elections".

Instead, the opposition aims to conduct its online voting through the Coordination Council, but in practice, this opportunity will only be available to the Belarusian diaspora living abroad, leaving no impact on the implementation and results of the election.

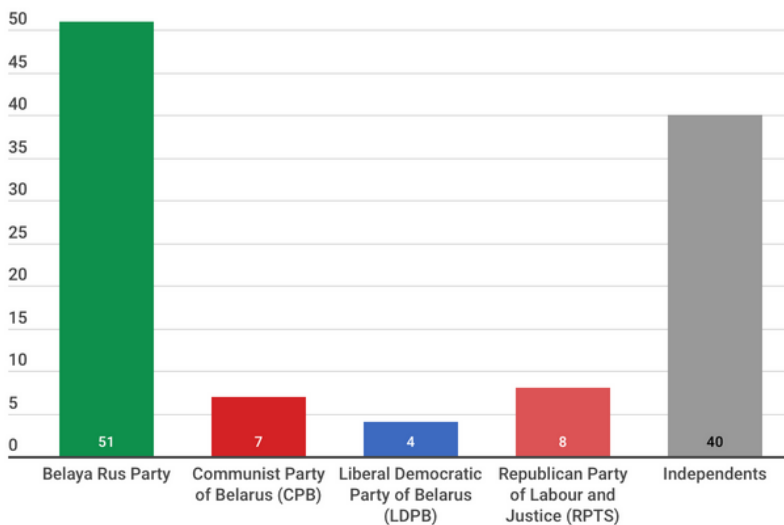


Source: IPU Parline

## The running political entities, their main candidates, and political orientations

Political entity	Main candidate	Political ideology
Belaya Rus Party	Oleg Romanov	Pro-Lukashenko, Euroscepticism, Authoritarianism
Communist Party of Belarus (CPB)	Aliaksiej Sokal	Communism, Marxism-Leninism, Pro-Lukashenko
Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus (LDPB)	Oleg Gaidukevich	Right-wing populism, Russian-Belorussian unionism, Pro-Lukashenko
Republican Party of Labour and Justice (RPTS)	Alexander Khinzhyak	Socialism, Social democracy, Pro-Lukashenko

## Election results 2024



Source: CEC of Belarus

In the framework of a panel discussion series, the **Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe** analyzes parliamentary elections in the countries of Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. The event is jointly organised with the Political Academy of the Austrian People's Party and the Karl-Renner-Institut.

