

BelarusBrief

News from the Belarusian Diaspora in the USA, JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2022 aba-together.org

BELARUSIAN DIASPORAS MOBILIZE AGAINST THE WAR

On February 24, 2022, Russia attacked Ukraine, using Belarus as a springboard for its armed forces.

The involvement of Belarus in Putin's invasion of Ukraine **is the direct consequence of Belarusian autocrat Aliaksandr Lukashenka's efforts to suppress political dissent in the country and remain in power.** After the ludicrously fraudulent presidential elections of August 2020, Lukashenka faced unprecedented, massive, and long-lasting protests. Unrecognized by most of the international community as a legitimate president of Belarus, Lukashenka turned to Russia for political and economic support and allowed for the massive accumulation of the Russian military in Belarus under the pretext of "joint military exercises." The sham constitutional "referendum" of February 27, 2022 further allowed Russia to station its nuclear and conventional troops in Belarus indefinitely ([Atlantic Council](#), [Reuters](#), [Foreign Policy](#)).

After the Russian troops failed to leave Belarus at the end of joint military exercises, many commentators considered **Belarus as de facto occupied by Russia** ([Atlantic Council](#), [The Atlantic](#), [Washington Post](#), [Global News](#)). The Belarusian territory provided Putin's military with a closer route to Kyiv. Massive columns of military equipment have been moving into Ukraine from the southern areas of Belarus.

Belarusian troops are said to be preparing to join the invasion ([Washington Post](#), [CNN](#)).

Thousands of Belarusians protested the war in Ukraine and the regime's role in it on the day of the so-called referendum ([Tsikhanouskaya](#), [RFE/RL](#)). The protests occurred despite the ongoing repression in Belarus and near-certain risks of detention and criminal charges. More than 800 were arrested, and many remain in the detention centers in inhumane conditions ([Reuters](#), [Viasna](#)).

Anti-regime resistance groups Cyberpartisans and ByPol held a special operation to disable the operation of the Belarusian railroad, used for the transportation of Russian military equipment ([Cyberpartisans](#), [ByPol](#), see also [Atlantic Council](#)).

The EU, the US, and other countries introduced new sanctions against Belarus due to its involvement in and facilitation of the war in Ukraine. The US Embassy in Belarus was closed due to security concerns ([US Treasury](#), [von der Leyen](#), [Time](#), [Reuters](#), [CNN](#), [US Dept of State](#), [Wall Street Journal](#)).

Human rights organizations described the "atmosphere of total fear" in the country ahead of the referendum. During the winter, people who had expressed dissenting opinions were dismissed en masse from state enterprises and institutes, including factories, universities, and hospitals ([Viasna](#)). There are currently 1076 political prisoners in Belarus ([Viasna](#)).

Pro-democracy leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya accused Lukashenka of "treason and betrayal of our people's and Belarus' national interests" and declared herself the national leader ([Tsikhanouskaya](#), [Reuters](#)).

TSIKHANOUSKAYA ANNOUNCED ANTI-WAR MOBILIZATION. She appealed to stop disinformation, deployment of Belarusian soldiers to Ukraine, and the work of the military infrastructure in Belarus (see the appeals in [Russian](#) and [English](#)).

Association of Belarusians in America (ABA)

- calls on Russia immediately to cease the attack and to withdraw its troops from Ukraine;
- urges the US government to act and aid Ukraine to stop the Russian aggression;
- appeals to the Belarusians in the US to join and help organize anti-war rallies in support of Ukraine, collect and ship humanitarian aid to Ukraine, and confront the Russian propaganda.

DONATE to [INeedHelpUA](#) for volunteers to buy food, basic necessities and first-aid kits, and have them deliver to the Ukrainian sorting center in Warsaw.

Direct people who can accommodate refugees to <https://icanhelp.host/>

For weekly news on Belarus, visit BelarusFF.org. You can [add your email](#) to receive weekly news summaries.

BelarusBrief JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2022

The Belarusian diaspora across the United States helped organize and attended numerous anti-war rallies supporting Ukraine. Collections of funds and humanitarian aid were set up to aid Ukraine.



Downtown Portland, OR



Stone Arch Bridge in Minneapolis, MN



Public Garden in Boston, MA



City Hall in San Francisco, CA



Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, PA



Independence Mall, Washington, DC



State Capitol, Austin, TX



Times Square, NYC, NY



Uptown Charlotte, NC