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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

August 20, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I am writing with regard to the International Monetary Fund's August 23rd allocation of almost \$1 billion Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) to the Government of Belarus. This funding would undermine United States' efforts to deprive the illegitimate Lukashenka regime of resources that it can use to continue to brutally oppress the Belarusian people. I urge the United States government to no longer recognize the Lukashenka regime and urge the IMF to do the same. It is imperative that the international community deny the Lukashenka regime these resources.

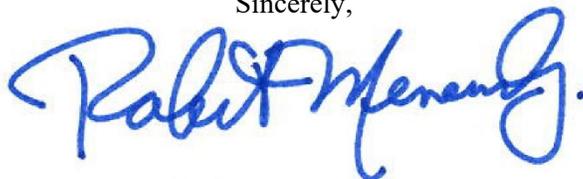
The August 2020 election in Belarus was a sham and a tragedy for the Belarusian people who have risked so much for freedom. The government's ongoing crackdown on the democratic opposition, and its brutal treatment of journalists—including by using fighter aircraft to intercept a civilian Ryanair flight to arrest blogger Raman Pratasevich this past May—must not be tolerated by the international community. I welcome your August 9th executive order and new sanctions on the Lukashenka regime. The United States must continue to be the leading voice in standing up for the rule of law, democracy, and human rights—including at the IMF.

I understand that the IMF's SDR allocation is a blanket authorization and allocated based on each country's respective quota share. Belarus would have to exchange these SDRs for hard currency and the Lukashenka regime will likely be able to easily identify a willing and capable trading partner. We should not allow this regime a lifeline to stabilize their financial system and economy while we simultaneously increase pressure with your executive order and work with our allies in Europe.

Therefore, in order to block the Belarus SDR allocation from going through, the IMF would have to formally de-recognize the Lukashenka government. The United States should lead this charge working through the IMF. The U.S. has recently led similar efforts when the illegitimate governments in Venezuela and Burma were denied access to their reserves.

I stand ready to work with you in advancing this approach, and I thank you for your leadership in supporting democracy and human rights in Belarus.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
Chairman