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The Belarusian opposition divided as always

On 24 November, the Belarusian democratic forces organised a demonstration in the centre of Minsk, whose main slogan was the demand for Alyaksandr Lukashenka to resign as President. Both the preparations for and the course of the demonstration once again showed up the deep divisions within the opposition, and its leaders' inability to exploit the dissatisfaction of some sections of society at the situation in the country.

The protest's organisers understood the action to be a rehearsal for mass protests by supporters of Belarusian democratic forces, planned for the evening of 19 December. However, during the preparations for the demonstration, deep divisions appeared between the opposition politicians, as a result of which only three of the nine candidates registered to run against Lukashenka in the upcoming presidential elections participated in it. It appears that this lack of unity has been translated into disinterest on the part of the general public; according to various estimates, between 500 and 1000 people participated in the demonstration. The forces of law and order did not intervene, even though representatives of the Interior Ministry had warned against organising meetings in a place not designated for electoral rallies. The opposition action of 24 November demonstrated that the animosities among individual opposition leaders have even extended to the organisation of joint protests. In connection with this, the Belarusian democratic forces are still unable to organise any demonstrations on a wider scale, although according to opinion polls conducted in October by the Belarusian independent institute NISEPI, around 10% of Belarusians say they would be ready to take part in protests. <kam>