

The Weekly Intelligence Brief



VOL. V No. 1

CONWAY, MONDAY, September 13th, 2021

TENSIONS BETWEEN BELARUS AND THE EUROPEAN UNION RISE REGARDING REFUGEE INFLUX



*Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko
Image Credit: Independent*

By Clay Penegar, Europe Desk

Due to the withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan, Eastern Europe has seen an influx of refugees. There have been noticeably high waves of migrants heading westward from the borders of Belarus. This sudden ingress of refugees has caused frustration for European Union (EU) member countries - most notably, Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania.

On August 11, Latvia declared a state of emergency and increased border patrols to prevent further entry of migrants from Belarus. The Lithuanian government ordered the construction of a 13 ft high barbed-wire fence and military patrols along its border with Belarus. Additionally, Poland proceeded to declare a state of emergency along the Belarusian border on September 2.

The EU member states have mutually agreed that the Belarusian government under President Lukashenko had encouraged mass migration westward as a means of retaliation for the various sanctions it had acquired over the past year. This has resulted in migrants stuck along the borders between the EU member countries and Belarus with neither side willing to accept them. On September 8, President Lukashenko responded to the situation by threatening Belarus's withdrawal from an EU migrant agreement. This agreement enables the return of immigrants that entered the EU from Belarus illegally or broke their terms of stay.

This response does not bode well for the future political relations between EU member states and Belarus. It can also be stated with moderately high confidence that relations regarding immigration policies will not improve in the near future.

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*Protesters displaying the Montenegrino Flag
Image Credit: Financial Times*

Ethnic Tensions Flare as New Head of Serbian Church is Inaugurated

By Tyler Connolly, Europe Desk

On Sunday, September 5, police in Cetinje, Montenegro, clashed with protestors who opposed the inauguration of a new head of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC). This clash comes after protestors blocked the road on Saturday in an attempt to stop the inauguration. Since Montenegro's independence from Serbia in 2006, citizens have remained divided over the country's ties with Serbia. While around 30% of the country's population consider themselves Serb, some Montenegrins have continued to oppose Serbian influence in the nation, wanting a separate Orthodox church.

Police fired tear gas in an attempt to disperse the protestors, who in return threw rocks and other objects. Around 60 people were injured, including 20-30 police officers, and 15 people were arrested. The new head of the Serbian church later arrived by helicopter to avoid the road blockades and was led into the Cetinje monastery by armed riot police.

It can be stated with high confidence that the ethnic tensions will continue in Montenegro between those who identify as Serbian and those that oppose continued Serbian influence within the country.

Latin America Struggling with COVID-19 Vaccinations **Hannah Crumpton, Head of Latin America Desk**

Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Director Carissa F. Etienne announced the launch of the Regional Platform to Advance the Manufacturing of COVID-19 Vaccines and other Health Technologies in the Americas. The initiative comes in response to issues regarding COVID-19 prevention efforts as there is a limited global production of COVID-19 vaccines, a rising unequal distribution, and a higher demand for vaccines.

Officials of the World Health Organization (WHO) have called on various countries with a surplus of COVID-19 vaccines to speed up donations of doses to Latin American nations where immunization is moving slowly. As reported by PAHO, "Only one in four people in Latin America and the Caribbean have been fully immunized against COVID-19." Latin America and the Caribbean have received donations of around 43.3 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines through bilateral agreements and the United Nations-backed COVAX program. The COVAX program is another WHO initiative whose goal is to accelerate the development and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. Latin America needs an additional 540 million doses to ensure every country can fully immunize 60 percent of the population. Many hospitals are over capacity from COVID-19 patients, and infections are continuing to rise in countries like Costa Rica, Belize, and Guatemala.

Based on this information, we believe with high confidence that it is unlikely that Latin America will have the vaccines available to vaccinate 60 percent of its population within the next year.



*Vials of the COVID-19 Vaccination in Production
Image Credit: PAHO*