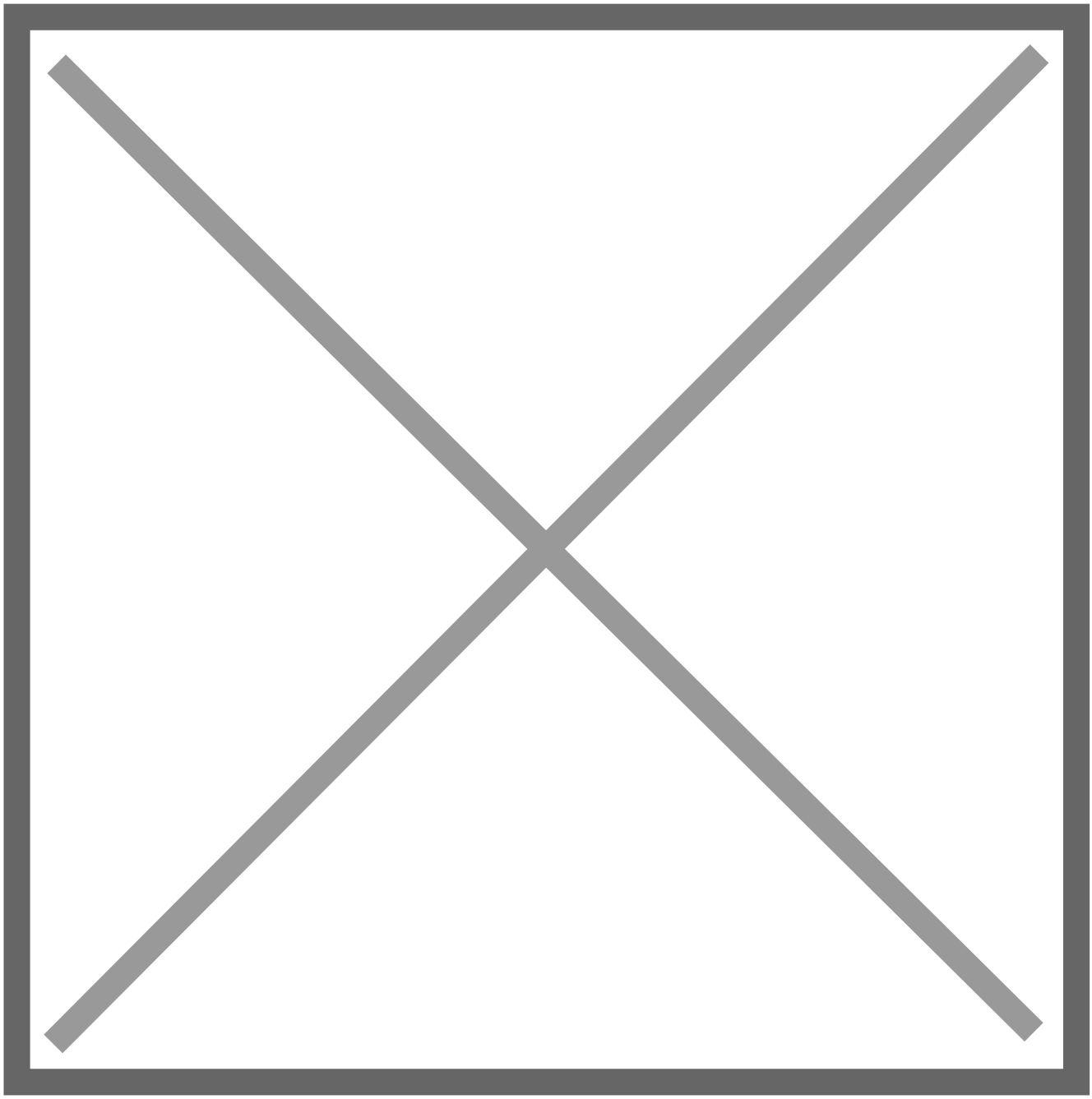
Vatican
News



People attend an opposition rally in Minsk, Belarus, Sept. 6, 2020, to protest against police brutality and to reject the presidential election results. (CNS/via Reuters/Tut.By)



by Catholic News Service

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Washington — September 11, 2020

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As the Vatican foreign minister met with officials in Belarus, the chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace urged prayers for Belarusians during their sociopolitical crisis.

Archbishop Paul Gallagher, Vatican foreign minister, met with Belarusian Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei in Minsk Sept. 11. The Vatican said Gallagher also would meet with church leaders and was in the country as a sign of Pope Francis' concern and closeness to the people.

Belarus has been in a state of social upheaval since the government announced that President Alexander Lukashenko, in power since 1994, had won reelection Aug. 9.

Since then, the country's main opposition leaders have been forced into exile. Thousands of people have taken to the streets in protest, and church authorities confirmed Catholic clergy and laypeople had been beaten and jailed. Police also barricaded Sts. Simon and Helena Church and, hours later, arrested protesters who had sought refuge there as they exited the building.

In a letter read in Catholic churches Aug. 30, Minsk Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz warned of impending civil war. The following day, he was refused reentry into the country and has been residing in Poland since. The archbishop — a Belarusian citizen — has sought legal advice about his situation.

On Sept. 11, Bishop David J. Malloy of Rockford, Illinois, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace, noted

the situation "continues to be tense."

"My prayers are for peace and justice for Belarus. I urge that the human rights of all citizens be respected," he said. He also invited "all Catholics and people of goodwill to join with the Holy Father in his prayers for peace and justice to prevail in Belarus."

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