

= Flag of Belarus =

The current state flag of Belarus (Belarusian : Беларусь , Sciah Bielarusi ; Russian : Беларусь , Flag Belarusi) is a red and green flag with a white and red ornament pattern placed at the staff (hoist) end . The current design was introduced in 2012 by the State Committee for Standardization of the Republic of Belarus , and is adapted from a design approved in a referendum in May 1995 . It is a modification of the 1951 flag used while the country was a republic of the Soviet Union . Changes made to the Soviet @-@ era flag were the removal of symbols of communism (the hammer and sickle and the red star) and the reversal of the colors of the ornament pattern , from white on red to red on white . Since the 1995 referendum , several flags used by government officials and agencies were modeled from the national flag .

This design replaced the historical white @-@ red @-@ white flag used by the Belarusian People 's Republic of 1918 , before Belarus became a Soviet Republic , and again after it regained its independence in 1991 . Opposition groups have continued to use this flag , though its display in Belarus has been restricted by the government of Belarus , which claims it was linked with Nazi collaboration during the Second World War . The white @-@ red @-@ white flag is used in protests against the government and by the Belarusian diaspora .

= = Design = =

The basic design of the national flag of Belarus was first described in Presidential Decree No.214 of June 7 , 1995 . The flag is a rectangular cloth consisting of two horizontal stripes : a red upper stripe covering two @-@ thirds of the flag 's height , and green lower stripe covering one @-@ third . A vertical red @-@ on @-@ white Belarusian decorative pattern , which occupies one @-@ ninth of the flag 's length , is placed against the flagstaff . The flag 's ratio of width to length is 1 : 2 .

The flag does not differ significantly from the flag of the Byelorussian SSR , other than the removal of the hammer and sickle and the red star , and the reversal of red and white in the hoist pattern . While there is no official interpretation for the colors of the flag , an explanation given by President Alexander Lukashenko is that red represents freedom and the sacrifice of the nation 's forefathers , while green represents life .

In addition to the 1995 decree , " STB 911 ? 2008 : National Flag of the Republic of Belarus " was published by the State Committee for Standardization of the Republic of Belarus in 2008 . It gives the technical specifications of the national flag , such as the details of the colors and the ornament pattern . The red ornament design on the national flag was , until 2012 , 1 ? 12 the width of the flag , and 1 ? 9 with the white margin . As of 2012 , the red pattern has occupied the whole of the white margin (which stayed at 1 ? 9) .

= = = Colors = = =

The colors of the national flag are regulated in " STB 911 ? 2008 : National Flag of the Republic of Belarus " and are listed in the CIE Standard illuminant D65 .

= = = Hoist ornament pattern = = =

A decorative pattern , designed in 1917 by Matrena Markevich , is displayed on the hoist of the flag (as it was previously , on the 1951 flag) . The pattern , derived from local plants and flowers , is a traditional type commonly used in Belarus . These patterns are sometimes used in woven garments , most importantly in the traditional ' rushnyk ' , a woven cloth used for ceremonial events like religious services , funerals , and other more mundane social functions , such as a host offering guests bread and salt served on a rushnyk .

= = Proper flag protocol = =

Before 1951 , several different flags had been in use since the Revolution . The earliest flag was plain red , and was used in 1919 during the existence of the Lithuanian @-@ Byelorussian SSR . After the formation of the Byelorussian SSR , the lettering ??? (SSRB) was added in gold to the top hoist . This design was established with the passage of the first Constitution of the Byelorussian SSR . It was later modified in the 1927 Constitution where the letters were changed to ??? (BSSR) but kept the overall design the same . This design was changed in 1937 , when a hammer and sickle and red star were placed above the letters . The flag dimensions were also formally established as 1 : 2 for the first time . This flag remained in use until the adoption of the 1951 flag , which did away with the letters .

= = = White @-@ red @-@ white flag = = =

The design of the flag used between 19 September 1991 and 5 June 1995 had originally been devised by the Belarusian People 's Republic (March to December 1918) . The original person behind the design of the flag is believed to have been Klaudzi Duzh @-@ Dusheuski before 1917 and this design is known in Belarusian as the byel @-@ chyrvona @-@ byely s 'tsyah (??? @-@ ??????? @-@ ??? ???? ; literally " white @-@ red @-@ white flag ") . Red and white have traditionally been used in state heraldry of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Polish ? Lithuanian Commonwealth . The colors are also based on those of the coat of arms Pahonia that was a traditional coat of arms of Belarusian lands and had a white horseman on a red background . There are several other theories explaining the flag 's origin . One theory speaks of an allusion to the name of the country : White Ruthenia .

Variations of this flag were used during the Belarusian People 's Republic in 1918 ? 1919 . The white @-@ red @-@ white flag is still used by the Republic 's government @-@ in @-@ exile . Lasting from 1919 until 1925 , the flag of the BPR retained the white , red , white design , but with the addition of black stripes at the top and bottom of the red stripe . Between 1921 and 1939 the white @-@ red @-@ white flag was used by the Belarusian national movement in West Belarus (part of the Second Polish Republic) , both by political organizations like the Belarusian Peasants ' and Workers ' Union or the Belarusian Christian Democracy , and non @-@ political organizations like the Belarusian Schools Society . The flag was also used by the Belarusian Special Battalion in the army of the Republic of Lithuania . After the invasion of Poland and the annexation of modern @-@ day West Belarus in 1939 the flag was forbidden by the Soviet administration in the newly acquired territories as well .

In 1941 the flag was allowed for usage by the Nazi occupation administration , and it appeared on arm patches of Belarusian volunteers in the German Army and Waffen SS and was used by the Belarusian Central Rada , the pro @-@ German government of Belarus in 1943 ? 1944 . After the end of World War II the flag was used by Belarusian diaspora in the West and by small groups of anti @-@ Soviet resistance in Belarus itself . In late 1980s the flag was again used as a symbol of national revival and democratic changes in Belarus . By proposal of the Belarusian Popular Front the flag became state symbol of Belarus upon its regaining of independence in 1991 .

After 1995 the white @-@ red @-@ white flag is used as a symbol of the opposition to the regime of Alexander Lukashenko , most notably at the protests after the 2006 and 2010 presidential elections and at mass rallies on Freedom Day celebrations as well as Dziady memorial marches . The flag is not officially banned from public usage , but is treated by the authorities as an unregistered symbol which means that demonstration of it by political activists or sports fans can lead to arrests and confiscation of the flags . In early 2010 , the political activist Siarhei Kavalenka was arrested for placing the white @-@ red @-@ white flag atop a Christmas tree on the central square of Vitsebsk . The court gave Kavalenka three years of suspended sentence which was followed by a second arrest and Kavalenka 's several weeks long hunger strike . The hunger strike was interrupted by force @-@ feeding on 16 January 2012 .

= = = 1995 referendum = = =

The referendum that was held to adopt the state symbols took place on May 14 , 1995 . With a voter turnout of 64 % , the new flag was approved by a majority in the ratio of three to one (75 % to 24 %) . The other three questions were also passed by the voters . The way of carrying out the referendum as well as the legality of questioning the national symbols on a referendum was heavily criticized by the opposition . Opposition parties claimed that only 48 % of the entire voting population (75 % of the 64 % who showed at the polling stations) supported the adoption of the new flag , but Belarusian law (as in many other countries) states that only a majority of voters is needed to decide on a referendum issue . Upon the results going in favor of President Lukashenko , he proclaimed that the return of the Soviet style flag brought a sense of youth and pleasant memories to the nation .

Lukashenko had tried to hold a similar referendum before , in 1993 , but failed to get parliamentary support . Two months before the May 1995 referendum , Lukashenko proposed a flag design that consisted of two small bars of green and one wide bar of red . While it is not known what became of this suggestion , new designs (called " projects " in Belarus) were suggested a few days later , which were then put up to vote in the 1995 referendum .

= = Other related flags = =

Since the introduction of the 1995 flag , several other flags adopted by government agencies or bodies have been modeled on it .

The presidential standard , which has been in use since 1997 , was adopted by a decree called " Concerning the Standard of the President of Republic of Belarus " . The standard 's design is an exact copy of the national flag , with the addition of the Belarusian national emblem in gold and red . The standard 's ratio of 5 : 6 differs from that of the national flag , making the standard almost square . It is used at buildings and on vehicles to denote the presence of the president .

In 2001 , President Lukashenko issued a decree granting a flag to the Armed Forces of Belarus . The flag , which has a ratio of 1 : 1 , has the national ornamental pattern along the length of the hoist side of the flag . On the front of the flag is the Belarusian coat of arms , with the wording " Armed Forces " (" Armed Forces ") arched over it , and " of Republic of Belarus " (" of Republic of Belarus ") written below ; the text of both is in gold . On the reverse of the flag , the center contains the symbol of the armed forces , which is a red star surrounded by a wreath of oak and laurel . Above the symbol is the phrase " For our Motherland " (" For our Motherland ") , while below is the full name of the military unit .