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2 EU Politicians Barred From Entering Russia for Nemtsov Funeral

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Poland's Senate speaker said Monday that Russia's authorities have denied him entry into the country for the funeral of slain Kremlin critic Boris Nemtsov.

Bogdan Borusewicz — Poland's leading opposition activist under communism — was to lead a delegation of Polish politicians and lawmakers attending Nemtsov's funeral Tuesday. Nemtsov was shot dead Friday night near the Kremlin.

Borusewicz told reporters that he was informed he would not get permission to enter Russia. It was not immediately clear if other members of the delegation would get their visas, but they were considering canceling the trip.

The ban comes at a time when Poland's ties with Russia are strained over the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Marcin Wojciechowski, spokesman for Poland's Foreign Ministry, said it was in response to European Union sanctions on the speaker of the upper house of the Russian parliament,

Valentina Matviyenko.

A spokeswoman for the Russian Embassy, Valeria Perzhinskaya, confirmed that Borusewicz is on a list of Western politicians who cannot enter Russia, but didn't elaborate.

In Brussels late Monday, a senior lawmaker in the European Parliament claimed that she too had been denied access to Russia as she traveled to attend Nemtsov's funeral.

Latvian lawmaker Sandra Kalniete, who is vice-chair of the biggest bloc in the EU assembly, said that all of Europe stands by Nemtsov's family, friends and Russian democrats "despite this decision of the Putin regime."

In a statement published on Tuesday, European Parliament President Martin Schulz deplored Russia's “repeated and arbitrary denial of entrance” to European parliamentarians, adding that Russia's travel ban on European officials was being “applied without the slightest element of reasoning.”

Kalniete, who served as Latvia's Foreign Minister from 2002 to 2004, tweeted an image of a Russian official document Tuesday, which said she had been banned from entering Russia until Nov. 2019.

The Russian Embassy in the Latvian capital Riga said in a statement Tuesday that the Latvian Foreign Ministry had been informed of Kalniete's addition to a “black list” in response to the European Union's expansion of travel bans against Russian parliamentarians.

The Latvian Foreign Ministry said in a statement Monday that the country expressed “deep indignation” over Russia's decision to deny her entry.

(AP, MT)

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