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Russia Threatens Retaliation Over Latvia's Expulsion of Journalists

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Journalist Olga Kurlayeva / Sputnik Youtube

Russia's Foreign Ministry is threatening tit-for-tat measures against Latvia after two Russian state media journalists were deported from the country earlier this week.

Latvian authorities detained and expelled TVT reporter Anatoly Kurlayev and his wife Olga Kurlayeva, a journalist at the state-run VGTRK media holding, for posing a threat to national security.

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Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova expressed outrage over the move on Friday, saying that Russia would have no other option but to retaliate if the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) did not weigh in on the deportation.

“The absence of a prompt and clear reaction and effective measures from the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media will mean that there’s no other mechanism [available] than retaliation,” she said.

Later on Friday, the OSCE media freedom spokesman, Harlem Désir, expressed concern over the deportation in a letter to the Latvian authorities.

“OSCE participating States have committed themselves to facilitating the work and accreditation of journalists coming from other OSCE States,” he wrote.

"Désir also stressed that the reasoning for such restrictive actions in both cases lacks transparency and remains unclear," an OSCE statement said.

Kurlayeva said that Latvian law enforcement representatives told her to leave the country on Thursday for posing a “threat to national security.” Her husband was reportedly expelled two days earlier based on a 2015 document banning his entrance to Latvia.

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