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Austria Expels 4 Russian Diplomats

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The Russian Embassy in Vienna. **C.Stadler / Bwag (CC BY-SA 4.0)**

Austria is expelling four Russian diplomats for conduct "incompatible" with their status, Vienna announced Thursday.

Austria's foreign ministry identified the "personae non gratae" as two workers with the Russian Embassy and two with the Russian mission to the UN without providing their names.

Vienna gave the four diplomats until next Wednesday, Feb. 8, to return to Russia.

It did not specify what actions prompted the four diplomats' expulsion.

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Russia's Foreign Ministry vowed retaliation to Austria's moves in comments to state media.

Diplomatic expulsions are rare in neutral Austria, which enjoyed close relations with Russia before Moscow invaded Ukraine.

In April 2022, Austria expelled four Russian diplomats as part of a coordinated EU action after the discovery of alleged killings of Ukrainian civilians by Russian troops in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha.

Before that, Austria expelled a Russian diplomat accused of espionage in April 2020.

The country of 9 million has traditionally seen itself as a bridge between the East and West.

Another figure forced to leave Austria this week was Christo Grozev, a Bulgarian investigative journalist and head of the Bellingcat open-source investigative group.

Grozev told Austrian media that intelligence operatives warned him about the danger of returning to Vienna from a trip to the United States due to alleged threats by the Russian security services.

It was unclear if Thursday's diplomatic expulsions were in any way linked to the alleged threats against Grozev, who was placed on Russia's wanted list late last year.

AFP contributed reporting.

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