The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Anti-War Rockers Held in Thailand Fly to Israel

January 31, 2024



A Bi-2 concert in Tallinn, Estonia, September 2023. **IMAGO / Konstantin Sednev**

Members of the anti-war Russian-Belarusian rock band Bi-2 have flown to Israel from Thailand, where they faced deportation after performing at a concert on the resort island of Phuket last week, according to a post on the group's official Facebook page.

Seven members of Bi-2, some of whom are dual citizens of Israel and Australia, were detained by Thai immigration authorities on Jan. 24 following the Phuket concert, with authorities saying that the event's organizers had failed to fill out paperwork properly.

Thailand's National Security Council, chaired by Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, took charge of the case on Wednesday, while the post made to the band's Facebook page on Thursday confirmed they had left the country.

"All musicians of Bi-2 have safely left Thailand and are heading to Tel Aviv," read the post, which added that further details about their departure would be released on Friday.

Related article: Russian Anti-War Rock Band Bi-2 Faces Deportation in Thailand

On Wednesday, the band said lead singer Yegor Bortnik, known by his stage name Lyova Bi-2, had already left Thailand to fly to Israel.

Thai officials said members of the band were arrested for performing without the correct work permits and transferred them to an immigration detention center in Bangkok.

The concert's organizers said all the necessary permits had been obtained, but noted that the band members had been issued tourist visas by mistake.

They also accused the Russian consulate of waging a campaign to cancel the Thailand concerts, saying they had faced "unprecedented pressure" as they sought the band's release.

Bi-2 has been performing outside Russia since the country invaded Ukraine nearly two years ago.

It refused to appear on stage in front of the pro-war symbol "Z" at a concert in April 2022, after which venues across Russia began canceling their performances.

In May, Russia's Justice Ministry designated Bortnik a "foreign agent."

Officials in Moscow had threatened Bi-2 with criminal persecution following news of the band members' detention in Thailand.

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova accused the musicians of "sponsoring terrorism."

AFP contributed reporting.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/01/31/russian-anti-war-rockers-held-in-thailand-fly-to-israel-a83925