

Norway Denies Asylum To Alleged Wagner Deserter

By [AFP](#)

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Norway has rejected an asylum application from a man claiming to have deserted Russian mercenary group Wagner and fled to the country, his lawyer told a Norwegian newspaper on Tuesday.

Andrei Medvedev, 27, alleges he fought in Ukraine as a member of Wagner for four months before deserting.

He sought asylum after fleeing to Norway in January 2023.

Medvedev claimed to have crossed the Russian–Norwegian border under dramatic circumstances, having to dash across the frozen Pasvik River in Norway's far north while being chased by dogs and Russian border guards who allegedly fired at him.

Questions remain about his past and his escape, however, with some experts arguing he could

not have crossed the heavily guarded border without assistance.

A potentially valuable witness in shedding light on the Wagner Group's reported brutality in Ukraine, Medvedev has had several run-ins with Norwegian authorities since arriving.

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His asylum request has now been denied, according to his lawyer.

"He has nevertheless been granted a temporary residence permit in Norway because of the risks that returning him to Russia would entail," Brynjulf Risnes told newspaper *Dagbladet*.

"If he had been a soldier in the Russian army, he could have been granted asylum in Norway even if he has taken part in the fighting in Ukraine.

"But since the Wagner group was not formally part of the Russian forces, Norwegian authorities believe that he should not get protection as a refugee," Risnes added.

The lawyer said his client planned to appeal against the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration's (UDI) decision.

The UDI cannot comment on individual cases due to confidentiality rules.

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