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Moldova Grants Citizenship to Members of Russian Anti-War Rock Band Bi-2

By AFP

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Members of the Bi-2 rock band with exiled Belarusian opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya.
Aleksandra Ovcherenko Bi-2 / AFP

Moldova has granted citizenship to several members of the Russian-Belarusian rock band Bi-2, the government in Chisinau announced late Monday, months after the music group was detained in Thailand and faced potential deportation to Russia.

President Maia Sandu signed a decree giving Moldovan passports to "certain members of Bi-2," her office chief Adrian Balutel announced on social media.

"Our country protects human dignity, freedom of expression and shows solidarity with those who are in danger," Balutel added.

Members of Bi-2, formed in the 1980s in Belarus when it was still part of the Soviet Union, left Russia in protest over the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and has since toured in countries with

large Russian-speaking diasporas.

Related article: Russian Anti-War Rockers Held in Thailand Fly to Israel

A spokesperson for the group said nine band members had been given Moldovan citizenship, including a guitarist, the group's artistic director and engineer, along with members of their families.

The group moved to the Moldovan capital of Chisinau last month but is currently on tour.

Bi-2's spokesperson said the band had met with Sandu after a concert last year, adding that they "appreciate the Moldovan leader and all those who have helped us."

Some of the band members have Australian and Israeli citizenship, as well as Russian.

Bi-2 made headlines in January when its members were detained for a week in Thailand after they purportedly incorrectly filled out immigration documents, sparking fears that they could be deported to Russia where they would face persecution.

After their release, the band went to Israel and has been touring again since March.

Bi-2 has been performing outside Russia since Moscow launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine more than 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.

Russia’s Justice Ministry designated lead singer Yegor Bortnik, known by his stage name Lyova Bi-2, a “foreign agent,” in May 2023.

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