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Kremlin Slams Bosnian Serb Leader's Jailing as 'Political'

By AFP

February 27, 2025



Milorad Dodik and Vladimir Putin meeting in St. Petersburg in June 2024. **kremlin.ru**

The Kremlin on Thursday criticized a one-year prison sentence for Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik as a "political" decision that could have "negative consequences" for the region.

Dodik was sentenced on Wednesday for defying rulings made by an international envoy charged with overseeing the country's peace accords.

"Dodik's persecution is absolutely political in nature and is directed not only against him, but against all patriotic forces," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"We condemn such actions because they can lead to negative consequences not only in Republika Srpska but also in the Balkans as a whole," he added.

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The Sarajevo trial, which followed months of mounting tension, has been widely seen as a litmus test of the Balkan nation's weak central government after Dodik violated the country's peace deal.

He was convicted after signing legislation that refused to recognize decisions made by Bosnia's international high representative, Christian Schmidt, and the constitutional court.

Dodik, a Kremlin ally, has held sway over Republika Srpska for years and has been sanctioned by the United States in 2017 and 2022 for his separatist policies in Bosnia.

Nearly a third of Bosnia's 3.5 million people live in Republika Srpska, whose territory makes up nearly half the Balkan country.

"We highly appreciate the trust and constructive relationship between [Russian President Vladimir] Putin and Dodik and the fraternal historical relations between Russians and Serbs," Peskov said on Thursday.

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