

Polish Court Refuses Extradition of Nord Stream Sabotage Suspect

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Ukrainian defendant Volodymyr Zhuravlyov. **Wojtek Radwanski / AFP**

A Polish court on Friday refused a German extradition request for a Ukrainian man suspected of involvement in the 2022 sabotage of the Nord Stream gas pipelines linking Russia with Europe.

The Warsaw judge said the German request "does not merit being taken into consideration" and ordered the Ukrainian released.

The decision comes days after Italy's top court made a similar ruling, refusing to extradite another Ukrainian suspect to Germany over the incident.

The long controversial Nord Stream pipelines that had shipped Russian gas to Europe for years were damaged by huge blasts just months after Moscow's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

"Case closed," Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk wrote on X, welcoming the decision.

The suspect arrested in a Warsaw suburb on Sept. 30, identified as Volodymyr Z. and said to be a diving instructor, had been sought by Berlin under a European arrest warrant.

According to the German prosecutors, he "was part of a group of individuals who placed explosive devices on the Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipelines near the island of Bornholm [Denmark] in September 2022."

His lawyer contested his extradition.

At the time of the suspect's arrest, he had accused the pipeline's owner, Gazprom, of financing Russia's military operations.

On Friday, Judge Dariusz Lubowski noted that the proceedings were not meant to determine the suspect's responsibility for the alleged acts but whether the acts constituted sufficient grounds for executing a European arrest warrant.

"The Polish court has no evidence in this case, as the German side has only provided very general information," he said.

He also noted that the court did not have the evidence to determine whether Kyiv was behind the pipeline explosion.

In the context of Russia's invasion, Lubowski argued that Ukrainians could not be considered terrorists or saboteurs because "in pursuing the goal of defending their homeland, they weaken the enemy."

The prosecutor's office, which supported the execution of the arrest warrant, has the option to appeal the decision.

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