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# Kremlin Condemns Poland's Arrest of Hermitage Employee on Ukrainian Warrant

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Alexander Butyagin. **Icity life**

The Kremlin on Thursday condemned the arrest of a prominent Russian archeologist in Poland, in connection with illegal excavation charges brought by Ukraine.

Polish media reported that Alexander Butyagin, who heads the ancient archeology department at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, was detained in Warsaw last week. He was reportedly traveling from the Netherlands to the Balkans while giving lectures across Europe.

A Polish court ordered Butyagin placed in 40 days of detention while Ukrainian authorities prepare an extradition request.

Ukraine's Office of the Prosecutor General in November 2024 charged Butyagin with the illegal excavation of an Ancient Greek site in annexed Crimea without obtaining permits from

Ukrainian authorities, causing the destruction of cultural heritage sites.

He faces up to 10 years in prison if extradited and convicted in Ukraine.

Butyagin had expressed surprise at Ukraine's accusations against him, saying he was focused on his life's work, and ensuring the preservation of archeological sites for public viewing.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Thursday described Butyagin's arrest as "legal abuse" and vowed that Russian diplomats would seek his release.

Peskov urged Russian citizens to avoid traveling to Poland, where he claimed they could face "complete lawlessness."

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Russian diplomats had visited Butyagin in jail. She said Butyagin's lawyer plans to appeal the "absurd" court ruling on his 40-day detention.

Butyagin has overseen archeological work at the Ancient Greek colony of Mymekion in the Crimean port of Kerch since 1999.

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014.

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