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Lithuania Affirms Volkov's Right to Stay After Social Media Backlash Over Leaked Messages

January 29, 2026



Leonid Volkov. **@vdud / YouTube**

Lithuanian authorities do not plan to deport Russian anti-corruption campaigner Leonid Volkov, a former aide to the late opposition activist Alexei Navalny, following a scandal over leaked messages where he criticized Ukrainian officials and a far-right paramilitary fighter.

The Baltic country's Interior Minister Vladislav Kondratovič said an investigation into Volkov determined that he did not pose any threat to Lithuania's national security, nor was any evidence uncovered that would suggest he supported Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"Therefore, the representative of the Russian opposition, who holds a temporary residence permit, may continue living in Lithuania," Kondratovič said during a press conference, according to the Baltic news outlet Delfi.

The head of migration Indrė Gasperė said Volkov's legal status remains unchanged in

Lithuania, where he has lived since 2019. However, Gasperė suggested the investigation should serve as a warning to the anti-Kremlin figure.

Volkov came under fire earlier this month following the leak of private messages where he accused Russian Volunteer Corps founder and leader Denis Kapustin of holding neo-Nazi views and being a "gift to Kremlin propaganda." He also called Ukraine's former spy chief Kyrylo Budanov "a disgusting provincial political technologist."

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Volkov later expressed regret over his "emotional and harsh" comments in the leaked messages, but he refused to back down from the underlying points in his criticism of Kapustin, who is known for his ties to far-right extremist circles and for founding a clothing brand that used Nazi symbols.

Ukrainian authorities have said they are investigating Volkov's comments following allegations that he "justified" the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but no criminal charges have been formally pressed.

Volkov has not commented on the Ukrainian investigation.

Kondratovič said Thursday that the Lithuanian probe looked into both Volkov's leaked comments and reactions to them from the Ukrainian authorities.

"Naturally, statements like these cause a certain public reaction, but the analysis went beyond treating it as a simple personal exchange between two individuals," Kondratovič said.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2026/01/29/lithuania-affirms-volkovs-right-to-stay-after-social-media-backlash-over-leaked-messages-a91817