

Russian Who Swam to Lithuania to Seek Asylum Gets 6 Years in Russian Prison After Return

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The Lithuanian side of the border with Russia. **Lithuanian MOD**

A Russian man who swam across the Neman River to Lithuania seeking asylum was sentenced to six years in prison after Lithuanian authorities returned him to Russia, media reported.

The Baltic Fleet Military Court on Sept. 30 found Igor Odintsov guilty of publicly calling for terrorism, the regional news outlet Russky Zapad [reported](#). He will serve his sentence in a high-security penal colony.

The court found that Odintsov had posted messages on a messaging app that portrayed the “ideology and practice of terrorism as correct and deserving of support and emulation.”

Investigators also said he held “radical views,” opposed Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and had a “negative attitude” toward the Russian authorities.

The Lithuanian news outlet Lrytas [identified](#) Odintsov, 68, as the Kaliningrad region resident

who swam across the Neman on Sept. 17 and sought asylum, saying he faced persecution in Russia over his social media posts.

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Lithuanian authorities detained him at around 1:50 p.m. local time and returned him to Russia through the Panemune border crossing at 7 p.m. that same day.

Odintsov fled to Lithuania on the day he was due to appear in a Russian court over the case.

Lithuania's State Border Guard Service said at the time that it had received no information about threats against him, any special status he held or arrangements for his admission to the European Union. It said he did not fall into a category of vulnerable people and decided to return him to Russia.

The border service now says it has "doubts" about whether Odintsov's statement could be considered a request for protection, saying it "was not expressed clearly and understandably."

Sigitas Šamborskis, chairman of the Lithuanian community in Kaliningrad, said he knew Odintsov and called the Lithuanian authorities' decision to expel him a "betrayal."

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