

Spanish-Russian journalist Pablo Gonzalez held six months in Polish jail on bogus spying charge

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Spanish journalist Pablo González has languished six months in preventive detention in Poland on fraudulent accusations of spying for Russia. His arrest was coordinated between NATO states, including Spain's Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government, and has met with silence by European and US media.

The journalist was arrested by Poland's Internal Security Agency (ABW) on February 28 after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as he covered the refugee crisis in the Polish town of Rzeszow. He is accused of working for Russian military intelligence (GRU). No evidence has been presented that González handed any information to the Russian secret services, however, or even that he ever had any intention to do so. However, the Polish Prosecutor's Office asked to prolong his detention last Friday; this will be examined by the regional court of Przemysl today.

Polish authorities' spurious evidence includes that González was in possession of two passports bearing different names, one Russian and one Spanish—implying that one was a false identity used for espionage. González's Russian passport names him as Pavel Rubtsov, using his father's surname; his Spanish document identifies him as Pablo González Yagüe, using his mother's two surnames. Pablo is the Hispanicised version of the Russian name Pavel.

González is the grandson of one of the “war children”—children transferred to the USSR for safety during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) that followed Francisco Franco's fascist coup in 1936. He has dual Russian and Spanish nationality and his father, whom he visits regularly, lives in Moscow. He has worked for different Spanish media such as the La Sexta television network or the liberal newspapers *Público* and *Gara*.

His work for these newspapers, his ability to speak

Russian, and his credit card from Caja Laboral (“Workers Fund”), a Basque credit union, were cited as evidence of alleged “pro-Russian” views.

The WSWs reiterates its demand that González should be immediately released. The arrest of a journalist on baseless spying charges is an anti-democratic attack on freedom of information and freedom of speech. It is a reactionary measure aiming to intimidate journalists and silence opposition to official, state-sanctioned narratives on the imperialist proxy war in Ukraine instigated by Washington and its NATO allies.

It comes amid an imperialist campaign to censor Russian media like RT and Sputnik, including cancelling them from social media like Twitter, Facebook, Tik Tok, YouTube and Google News; and seeking to block Russian artists and musicians from appearing internationally.

González is effectively being held incommunicado. Since he spoke to his wife on the day of his arrest, he has not been able to communicate again with her and their three children, or with his Spanish lawyer, Gonzalo Boye. Boye still does not have access to his detention file.

In his first appearance before the judge, he was not allowed to receive the assistance of any lawyer, contrary to international law. Only in the past two months has he been represented by a Polish lawyer who has been prohibited from talking about González's legal situation, and who has not yet contacted Boye. In May, Polish authorities extended his detention for another three months without further explanation.

The persecution of González has all the hallmarks of a coordinated campaign by US-led NATO governments to make him an example against other voices opposing NATO's war in Ukraine. The ruling elites in Poland, Ukraine and Spain itself have all been involved in his detention.

In early February, he was detained in Kiev, after receiving a phone call from the infamous Ukrainian security services (SBU) which are key to Ukraine's war effort and its campaign of domestic repression, including killing Ukrainian diplomats seeking to negotiate peace with Russia.

González was summoned to the capital, Kiev, for questioning. There, he was questioned by the SBU for allegedly being "pro-Russian." He was then "invited" to leave the country in three days, though no formal expulsion order was issued.

González returned to the Basque Country, in Spain, where he is based. Then on February 25, the day after Russia invaded Ukraine, González travelled to the Polish town of Rzeszow, on the border with Ukraine, to report on the refugee crisis. Shortly after González's interrogation by the SBU, the Spanish National Intelligence Centre (CNI) visited the homes of his family members in the Basque Country and Catalonia, reportedly questioning them about González's life and views, to establish if he was "pro-Russian."

According to *Público*, the security agents also told González's relatives that he was accused of having worked for *Gara*, described as "a pro-ETA media subsidised by Russia," and even of "passing information on to Russia."

In a blatant attempt at intimidation, numerous agents went to Pablo González's own home, where he lives with his wife Oihana Goiriena, and their three children.

In a clear sign that González's arrest is part of a broader NATO campaign against anti-war sentiment, the head of British secret services MI6, Richard Moore, defended expulsions and arrests of alleged Russian spies from Europe. He said such measures have allowed the Russian invasion of Ukraine to "run out of steam."

In a speech at the Aspen Security Forum in the United States, Moore said: "Two of them [Russian spies] have recently been arrested. One of them pretends to be a Spanish journalist, a guy named González Yagüe. He was trying to enter Ukraine to be part of Russian efforts at destabilization." Moore stated this without providing any evidence.

The PSOE-Podemos government has played a key role in his arrest. At the end of July, during an official visit to Poland, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez stated that the arrest of González was discussed with Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, but refused to provide any specific content on the conversation. Sánchez also boasted that the Spanish Foreign Minister is in contact with his Polish

counterpart to "follow up on the issue" and "provide support to the Spanish family."

According to González's wife, however, that support has been minimal and has only taken the form of "three visits from the consul, and advice on how to send him letters, how to send him packages, how to make transfers if necessary, and for now, little else."

Even more cynical is the role of Podemos. Having made perfunctory calls for González's freedom four months ago in one of its regional branches in Navarre, it has dropped the issue.

Podemos has helped implement Spain's war efforts against Russia. This includes stationing 800 troops, four Eurofighters and three warships in Eastern Europe; sending tanks, rocket launches and other offensive equipment to the Ukrainian army, including the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion; implementing the EU-NATO's crippling sanctions against Russia; and raising the defence budget by €10 billion to €25 billion, the largest military expenditure hike in Spain's history.

At the same time, Podemos is working to escalate domestic repression against journalists in Spain, as well. The PSOE-Podemos government plans to reform Spain's Official Secrets Law, enacted in 1968 under the dictatorship of General Franco, which included clauses to persecute whistle-blowers. Those accused of publishing classified material face fines of up to €3 million.

The fight for González's freedom requires a struggle against the entire political establishment, and its programme of war and authoritarianism. This must be based on mobilising the Spanish, European and international working class, the constituency for a genuine fight against capitalist reaction and in defence of democratic rights.



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