

Spanish-Russian journalist Pablo González still in “Polish Guantanamo” 18 months after arrest

Alice Summers
4 October 2023

A Polish court has extended for a further three months the imprisonment of Spanish-Russian journalist Pablo González, arrested in February 2022 on unsubstantiated charges of spying for Russia. This is the sixth time his “provisional detention” had been extended. González’s lawyers will be able to appeal the decision, although the court is expected to uphold it.

The journalist has now been left to languish in a Polish jail for more than a year and a half by the far-right Polish government, Spain’s Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government and all the NATO powers. He has not been found guilty of any crime, or ever faced a criminal trial. No date has even been set for him to face the charges in court.

His continuing detention exposes the NATO powers’ claims to be defending “human rights” against Russia in Ukraine and China in the Pacific.

González was arrested only days after the NATO-provoked Russian invasion of Ukraine, as he covered the influx of Ukrainian refugees into the Polish border town of Rzeszow. If convicted, González could face up to 10 years in prison.

His conditions resemble those “enemy combatants” detained by Washington at the notorious Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba. He spends 23 hours per day in isolation in a five-metre cell, with one hour of walking across a 10-metre patio. Every time he is taken out of the cell, he is searched and handcuffed. Upon entering, he is frisked again. Since his detention, he has only been able to receive a visit from his wife twice, the last time in November. Both visits took place in the presence of a jailer and an agent of the Polish intelligence services.

The arrest of a reporter on baseless spying allegations

is an assault of freedom of the press, aiming to intimidate journalists and silence reporting on the Russia-NATO war in Ukraine.

It has far-reaching implications for the ability of journalists to cover and criticise the actions of the imperialist powers, as NATO mounts a concerted campaign to obscure the origins of the war in Ukraine, instead presenting it one-sidedly as a Russian attack on defenceless Ukraine.

No substantive proof has been presented that González passed information to Russian secret services, or that he ever had any intention of doing so. Neither has any information been given to the journalist, his family or his lawyers about what the specific charges against him are, or what evidence the charges are based on.

Polish authorities still refuse to provide evidence that the reporter is a Russian spy. The only “proof” cited on his arrest was that González, who has dual nationality, was in possession of two passports bearing different names, one Russian and one Spanish—implying that one was a false identity used for espionage.

In reality, this proves nothing. González’s Russian passport names him as Pavel Rubtsov, using his father’s surname, while his Spanish document identifies him as Pablo González Yagüe, using his mother’s two surnames. Pablo is merely the Hispanicised version of the Russian name Pavel.

His work for newspapers including the Basque *Gara*, which Madrid has alleged is funded by the Russian state, his ability to speak Russian, and his credit card from Caja Laboral (“Workers Fund”), a Basque credit union, were also cited as evidence of alleged “pro-Russian” views.

In May, just over a year after González's arrest, the Russian opposition publication *Proekt* (formerly known as *Agentsvo*) reported that the Polish authorities had found documents supposedly proving that the journalist was a Russian intelligence agent. These documents allegedly consisted of several reports on González's mobile devices. However, little information has been given about what these reports contained, to whom they were addressed, or if they were ever sent to anyone.

Proekt claimed that these "reports" included information on Zhanna Nemtsova, daughter of Boris Nemtsov, a Russian opposition politician assassinated in Moscow in 2015, and on others linked to the foundation Nemtsova set up in her father's memory. González's lawyers have so far been prevented from reviewing any of the documentation allegedly found on their client's phone and computer.

None of these allegations offer any further proof that González was engaged in espionage for Russia. Even if they are true, they merely show that the reporter had collected information on one or several Russian citizens, which does not constitute criminal activity and is not beyond the remit of his role as a journalist reporting on Eastern Europe and Russia.

The Polish government could not act with such impunity were it not for the support of Spain's PSOE-Podemos government, NATO and the EU. In August 2021, in a clear sign that González's arrest was part of a broader NATO campaign, the head of British secret services MI6, Richard Moore, defended the arrest of the journalist at the Aspen Security Forum in the United States. Moore alleged González "was trying to enter Ukraine to be part of Russian efforts at destabilization."

The PSOE-Podemos government, meanwhile, has been central to González's arbitrary detention since the beginning. The day before he was arrested by Polish police, the Spanish National Intelligence Centre (CNI) visited the homes of his family members and asked them about his "pro-Russian" views.

Podemos, has made a few empty protestations, without ever demanding González's immediate release. This is the character of the letter sent to Polish Minister of Justice Zbigniew Zdrob by 14 social-democratic, Green, and pseudo-left European Members of Parliament.

Their letter denounces the conditions in which the journalist has been detained in Poland for over a year

and a half and demand that the Polish Government hand over González to Spain, so he "may return to Spain under provisional freedom, near his family and with guarantees of respect for his rights as a citizen of the European Union and the support of the Spanish Government to make this possible."

Signatories of the letter include social-democratic MEP Nacho Sánchez Amor and members of the Sumar electoral front containing Podemos, such as María Eugenia Rodríguez Palop, Sira Rego, Manu Pineda and Idoia Villanueva. These are members of parties that have ruled Spain over the past four years, imposing austerity at home and supporting NATO's war in Ukraine. Their letter is a toothless request aimed at covering for their war policy.

Sumar Movement is led by Spain's acting deputy prime minister and labour minister, Yolanda Díaz. Díaz and Sumar have refused to make any statements on González. In reality, all the ministers, senior officials and deputies of Podemos and Sumar have supported the US-NATO war.

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) reiterate their demand for the immediate release of Pablo González and an end to the intimidation and censorship of journalists and reporters. His long-term detention sets a dangerous precedent for future arrests, imprisonments and assaults on freedom of speech on baseless charges by governments across the world.

The fight for González's freedom must be part of a broader movement against the NATO war in Eastern Europe. It requires the mobilisation of the Spanish, European and international working class, the constituency for a genuine fight against capitalist reaction, against war and in defence of democratic rights.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact