

Neo-Nazi suspect arrested in killing of Ukrainian fascist Iryna Farion

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26 July 2024

On Thursday, the Ukrainian government announced that it had arrested 18-year-old neo-Nazi Viacheslav Zinchenko as a suspect in the political assassination of Ukrainian fascist Iryna Farion. Zinchenko claims to be an “autonomous revolutionary racist” and member of the organization NS/WP (National-Socialism/White Power). According to media reports, the presumed assassin is an admirer of Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* and an ardent antisemite.

Farion, a notorious far-right media figure and language professor at Lviv Polytechnic National University, was shot last Friday evening while waiting at a taxi stand near her apartment in Lviv. She later died from her injuries.

The assassination underscores the intense instability in Ukraine after over two years of war and half a million dead and the degree to which neo-Nazi forces have come to dominate political life in the country.

Farion initially rose to prominence as a Ukrainian MP for the neo-Nazi Svoboda party, before the party was swept into government by the 2014 US-backed far-right coup in Kiev that toppled a pro-Russian government. She was outspoken in her fascist hatred of all things Russian. News of her death was first announced by Andrii Sadovyi, mayor of Lviv and an admirer of the Ukrainian nationalist war criminal Stepan Bandera.

Although Farion’s killer shot her in the head in public at a taxi stand with multiple witnesses, Ukrainian authorities took five days to make an arrest in the brazen assassination. A young man in strange clothes was reportedly seen hanging around outside Farion’s apartment for several days but had since disappeared.

It now appears the police have found the suspect in the city of Dnipro, which is over 940 kilometers from Lviv.

Astonishingly, the suspect was able to post a video of the murder to Telegram prior to his arrest in which he claimed responsibility as a member of the neo-Nazi NS/WP organization.

As Ukrainian-Canadian Professor of Political Science Ivan Katchanovski reported on X, “such apparent impunity is similar to numerous assassinations and killings with far-right

involvement, including the Maidan and Odesa massacres.”

Immediately following the killing, the NATO-backed government of President Volodymyr Zelensky predictably moved to fault Russia for the murder of the ultranationalist Farion.

According to Zelensky, all potential motivations for Farion’s assassination were being investigated, including “the one leading to Russia.”

Meanwhile, Kyrylo Budanov, head of Defense Intelligence of Ukraine (DIU), was unequivocal in blaming Russia for the as-yet unsolved political killing.

“Today, Ukraine bid farewell to public activist and academic Iryna Farion. The cold-blooded murder of this famous linguist is a challenge for the whole of Ukrainian society, a crime against the fundamental rights and liberties of Ukrainians. This tragedy has once again shown that the enemy tries to use any tools to divide our nation,” Budanov stated on social media.

Budanov also absurdly claimed that in Ukraine “the right to have an opinion, the right to stand up for one’s beliefs, is sacred.” He then went on to glorify the fascist Farion, “Iryna Farion died for her pro-Ukrainian position. We have no right to tolerate such crimes and will continue to defend Ukraine both in the combat zone and in terms of domestic affairs.”

Such statements are an insult to the thousands of Ukrainians who have been arrested, interrogated, tortured or killed by Ukraine’s SBU simply for opposing the NATO proxy war with Russia. One of them is the young Trotskyist leader Bogdan Syrotiuk, who was imprisoned on April 25, based on trumped-up charges of “national treason,” because of his struggle to unite Russian and Ukrainian workers against the war.

While it cannot be ruled out that sections of the Russian state apparatus may have been behind the murder of Farion, it is far from the most likely option. The NS/WP has been labeled a “pro-Ukrainian” terrorist organization in Russia. In April last year, the Russian secret service FSB reported it had stopped the organization from carrying out attacks on military recruitment centers and police stations in Russia.

Moreover, it must be pointed out that this type of political assassination in the war has been so far pioneered above all by NATO-backed Ukrainian intelligence. Under the leadership of Kyrylo Budanov, Ukraine's military intelligence has carried out a number of political murders of far-right pro-Moscow political figures on Russian soil, such as Illia Kiva, Vladlen Tatarsky, and Daryna Dugina, daughter of the Russian nationalist political figure Aleksandr Dugin.

What appears far more likely is that Farion, who had made enemies in the secret services and the NATO-armed neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, fell victim to a flare-up of internecine factional struggle within Ukraine's state apparatus and fascist right.

The case of Farion is an object lesson in the elevation of fascists to the highest levers of the state apparatus and academia in Ukraine in the wake of the Stalinist destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991. Herself a former member of the Stalinist Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, Farion earned her political notoriety in the succeeding decades promoting the exclusive use of the Ukrainian language and all sorts of anti-Russian xenophobia.

As early as 2008, Farion promoted a ban of the Moscow-affiliated Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which she called "one of the biggest threats to the free and self-sufficient development of Ukraine." Zelensky's government ultimately fulfilled her wishes in October of last year by passing a ban on the church.

In 2012, Farion was elected to the Ukrainian parliament as a member of the far-right Svoboda party and would serve until 2014, before she returned to her work as a professor and produced a number of Ukrainian ultra-nationalist pseudo-historical TV series.

In November of 2023, Ukraine's SBU launched a criminal case against Farion after she criticized members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, in particular the neo-Nazi Azov regiment for continuing to speak Russian during wartime. While Azov is an anti-Russian fascist organization, much of its leadership originated in Russian-speaking regions of Ukraine such as founder Andriy Biletsky of Kharkov.

"Can a soldier or officer not follow orders from his commanding officer without breaking the law? I would like to ask every Russian-speaking soldier: Have you read the law on the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the Ukrainian Constitution, have you read what is written in Article 13? The language of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is the state language. So are you fighting for the Ukrainian state, or are you defending your right to be a speaker of the 'Russian world'? At least speak surzhyk [a Ukrainian-Russian pidgin], but don't speak Russian," Farion said.

It should also be noted that there are known ties between leaders of the NS/WP, the organization to which the

presumed assassin belongs, and the Azov Battalion.

Farion also came into conflict with the Ukrainian secret service SBU after she published a message from a pro-Ukrainian student from Crimea named Maksym Hlebov that included his full name and other personal details. Hlebov was later detained by Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) and forced to record an apology video for social media.

For both her criticism of Azov and outing of Hlebov, the SBU had charged Farion with "violating the equality of citizens, insulting the honor and dignity of a serviceman, and violating the secrecy of correspondence and privacy." The case remained open at the time of her death.

Following student protests against her comments and actions, Farion was suspended from her post at Lviv Polytechnic and then later reinstated and awarded \$3000 after appealing her case in May.

Farion reportedly donated the funds to buy drones for far-right military organizations that are rivals to the Azov Battalion, such as the Rubizh Brigade, the Sylva Svobody (Power of Freedom) and Svoboda (Freedom) Battalions, and the 5th Assault Brigade.

Whatever the true motivations behind Farion's killing, it is a clear sign of far-reaching political destabilization within Ukraine. Having been emboldened by the imperialist powers and the Ukrainian oligarchy, integrated into the Ukrainian state and army and armed to the teeth with NATO weapons, Ukraine's fascist forces are increasingly calling the shots in the nation's politics. Farion's assassination comes only a few weeks after Zelensky's elevation of a prominent member of the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion to the country's top military leadership.



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