

Video: Ryanair's Landing in Belarus and Its Far-reaching Impact on Europe

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Belarus has been regularly in and out of the spotlight in recent months, with protests, chaos and alleged assassination schemes against President Alexander Lukashenko.

On May 23rd, Ryanair flight FR4978 from Athens to Vilnius in Lithuania made an emergency landing at the Minsk international airport, following a false bomb threat.

The incident resulted in the arrest of opposition activist **Roman Protasevich**, who was on board.

He is best known as one of the main people behind the Belarus' opposition Nexta Live network.

It is operated out of Poland and is the main platform for coordination of the mass protests since 2020.

https://southfront.org/wp-content/uploads/video/25.05.2021_IMR_Belarus.mp4

At the moment, there are two main versions regarding the incident with the RyanAir aircraft: Either this was a high-profile operation of the special forces of Belarus aimed at detaining a young activist.

Or, conversely, it was an operation played out by the Belarus opposition forces supported by their Western allies, who seek to discredit President Lukashenko.

To shed light on the incident, a recording of a pilot's call with the dispatcher was released, proving they were not forced to land in Minsk and it was their own decision made in accordance with international rules.

Belarus officially claimed that they had received a message from the Palestinian group Hamas threatening to blow up a Lithuania-bound flight over Belarusian airspace unless the European Union condemned Israel over the conflict in the Gaza Strip.

Subsequently, a video showing that Protasevich was in good health and remained in a pre-trial facility was published online.

He also acknowledged his participation in organizing mass protests in Minsk in 2020.

Belarus' foreign ministry insisted the country's authorities acted "in full conformity with international rules" and accused Europe of politicizing the incident.

However, it did not prevent the EU from proclaiming more restrictions against Belarus.

In addition to blocking the use of the EU's airspace and airports, the EU is expected to hit individual officials and companies linked to the incident with sanctions.

The incident coincided with the European Summit, where a strategic debate on Russia is to be held.

The new international scandal may influence the final decision of European leaders.

The Russian Foreign Ministry criticized the West's response with spokeswoman Maria Zakharova.

She reminded everyone of similar incidents happening in recent years.

In 2013 US special forces, looking for Edward Snowden, forced the plane of the Bolivian President to make an emergency landing in Vienna.

The White House declined to compare the two incidents, but US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said Washington "strongly condemns" the Belarusian regime's "brazen and shocking act to divert a commercial flight to arrest a journalist".

It is still not clear who exactly was behind the emergency landing of the RyanAir flight in Minsk.

Regardless of all versions and speculations, it is evident that the incident will lead to a greater rift between Russia, Belarus and the so-called collective West.

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