
SLOVAKIA: POLICE ARREST ITALIAN BUSINESSMAN NAMED BY MURDERED REPORTER

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14.03.2018

Deutsche Welle (13 March 2018)

The Slovak general prosecutor's office said Tuesday it had detained Antonino Vadala in the eastern town of Michalovce over a drugs-related charge.

In a statement, the prosecutor's office said it had acted on a European arrest warrant issued by a court in Venice.

"The Italian court is demanding the extradition of Antonino V. for prosecution in Italy for a drug offense committed by an organized criminal group with a transnational scope."

Vadala was mentioned several times in an investigation by journalist Jan Kuciak, who was last month found shot dead at his Bratislava home with his fiancée, Martina Kusnirova. The 27-year-old's report, published unfinished days after his death, alleged high-level corruption and ties between the Mafia and businessmen operating in Slovakia.

The allegations

Vadala, who lives in eastern Slovakia and is the owner of several companies, was detained and released earlier this month along with six other Italians over the alleged crimes detailed in Kuciak's investigation. Kuciak alleged that Vadala had past business connections with two Slovaks who went on to work in the prime minister's office. Vadala denies the claims.

Venice chief prosecutor Bruno Cherchi said in a statement Vadala was under investigation for being part of a group dedicated to "international drugs trafficking and money laundering" that used apparently legal channels to import drugs from South America.

Government collapse?

Kuciak's murder triggered mass protests across Slovakia and calls for the government of Prime Minister Robert Fico to step down.

Police have interviewed more than 100 people as part of the investigation into the killings, but no one has yet been charged.

Slovakia's opposition party on Tuesday requested a no-confidence vote against the government. The vote, to take place next week, could see the collapse of the three-party ruling coalition that came to power following 2016 elections.

Slovakia has witnessed its largest protest since anti-communism rallies in 1989, with an estimated 50,000 gathering in the capital, Bratislava. The reason: the murder of investigative journalist Jan Kuciak and his fiancée. Their murders sent shockwaves across the country and the EU. Kuciak was working on a story linking businessmen operating in the country with the Italian Mafia before his death.

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