
MONTENEGRO SHAKEN AFTER JAILING OF OPPOSITION LEADER NEBOJSA MEDOJEVIC

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The dramatic jailing of Nebojsa Medojevic prompted outrage among Montenegro's government critics. Medojevic, a lawmaker for the opposition Democratic Front party, was detained by police as he was leaving the Montenegrin parliament after midnight on November 30 and spent 13 days behind bars.

Authorities said Medojevic was detained to force him to testify in a corruption case, saying the case is not covered by the lawmaker's parliamentary immunity. Last Wednesday, however, the nation's Constitutional Court ruled that jailing Medojevic was unconstitutional and ordered his release.

The government, led by longtime President Milo Djukanovic, presented the ruling as proof that Montenegrin judiciary is independent. But the 52-year-old Medojevic has claimed his jailing shows that state and the ruling party are one and the same in Montenegro.

"I asked to be placed in solitary confinement for my own safety, because there was a danger for me to be attacked by powerful figures from security services and the mafia through their people in prison," Medojevic told DW.

"The prison staff was completely professional and did everything by the book, and I was complying with the house rules, so we had no problems."

Medojevic launched a hunger strike during his time in jail. While he was locked up, his ally Milan Knezevic hid inside the parliament building to avoid arrest. Knezevic only left the building following the Wednesday ruling.

Both lawmakers were wanted over the claims they had made against Montenegro special prosecutor Milivoje Katnic. Earlier this year, Medojevic accused Katnic of taking a ████████ (\$113,670) bribe from a former mayor of Podgorica to keep him out of jail. Authorities launched a probe in the wake of Medojevic's statement, but the lawmaker refused to testify.

Free speech activist Darko Ivanovic told DW that Medojevic was arrested as if he were a criminal, simply for making a statement. By arresting a lawmaker, the authorities are "sending a message that these things are possible, that immunity means nothing, that the institutions violate the constitution with incredible ease," Ivanovic said.

The activist also pointed to the recent attacks on journalists in the country, also targeted because of what they say and write.

Political analyst Sergej Sekulovic says a fragile deal between the pro-government lawmakers and their rivals to create a new election law was made under pressure from the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation of Europe. He said the arrest of Medojevic puts it at risk.

"This makes Brussels worried," he told DW.

Medojevic's Democratic Front has announced it would suspend its parliamentary activity until the Constitutional Court rules on the issues they have raised. The parliamentary board is due to present its draft for election reform by next October.

<https://www.dw.com/en/montenegro-shaken-after-jailing-of-opposition-leader-nebojsa-medojevic/a-46765434>

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