

## **MACRON MET WITH LYUDMYLA KOZLOVSKA, PRESIDENT THE OPEN DIALOGUE FOUNDATION**

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**Oleg Sentsov, a Ukrainian film director who spent five years in a Russian gulag, and Lyudmyla Kozlovka, President the Open Dialogue Foundation, who was expelled from Poland by the Law and Justice government, met in Strasbourg with the French President, Emmanuel Macron.**

The meeting, which took place on Tuesday, 1 October and lasted for half an hour was primarily focused on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Sentsov, a 43-year-old Ukrainian film director, is one of its victims. In May 2014, two months after the annexation of Crimea by Russia, Sentsov was arrested in Crimea, transferred to Moscow and accused of preparing terrorist attacks. He was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment in a gulag. Finally, on 7 September this year, as a result of numerous international appeals, he was released by the Russians in exchange for several Russian citizens who had been arrested in Ukraine.

Macron, who had provided diplomatic support in the prisoner exchange process, was the first Western leader to meet Sentsov.

The meeting was also attended by Lyudmyla Kozlovka, Head of the Open Dialogue Foundation, who is also actively engaged in the question of the Ukrainian conflict. Kozlovka presented President Macron with a list of 86 Ukrainians who still remained imprisoned in Russia.

Even though the meeting focused on the situation in Ukraine only, the very fact that Kozlovka was invited by the French President sends a clear signal to Warsaw.

Kozlovka, an NGO activist, has begun to be perceived by the Law and Justice party as one of its top enemies. This can be attributed to her commitment to protests that broke out in summer 2017 against Law and Justice plans to gain control over the Polish judicial system. A year later, the Head of the Polish Internal Security Agency entered Kozlovka's personal data into the Schengen Information System and issued an SIS alert. Implicitly, Kozlovka, who holds a Ukrainian passport, was denied the right of entry into the territory of the majority of EU Member States. She was not allowed to enter Poland, either, despite the fact that she is married to a Polish citizen, Bartosz Kramek.

The Polish authorities have never disclosed why they recognised her as a threat; the only doubts that were indicated related to the funding of the Foundation's activity, and allegations that Kozlovka was working for Russia. Witold Waszczykowski, the former Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, has accused her of encouraging the toppling of the Polish government.

According to Kozlovka herself, this was simply a retaliation for her involvement in anti-government protests and an attempt to discourage other foreigners staying in Poland from participating in such events.

### **Europe willing to listen to her**

Nevertheless, Law and Justice's arguments have been refuted abroad. In September 2018, Germany, which disregarded the Polish alert, issued a "national interest" visa for Lyudmyla Kozlovka to enable her to participate in a conference at the Bundestag on the question of populist tendencies in the Central Europe.

Two weeks later, Belgium issued a similar visa, and Kozłowska was invited to the premises of the European Parliament to speak about the Polish government's attacks on judges.

Other countries to follow this trend included the United Kingdom, France and Switzerland.

This truly infuriated the Law and Justice government. Pro-government journalists claimed that "the Germans have waged war against Poland". The German Ambassador was summoned to the office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. President Andrzej Duda complained about this issue to the President of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier. Meanwhile, Bartosz Cichoński, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, in his tweets, has accused countries accepting Kozłowska of disloyalty.

Finally, Lyudmyla Kozłowska obtained a Belgian permanent residence permit and her personal data has been deleted from the Schengen Information System.

Furthermore, the Voivodship Administrative Court has overruled the decision issued by the Governor of the Masovian Voivodship, who refused Kozłowska the right to stay in Poland. According to the judges, the decision was taken based on very general and insufficient evidence provided by the Polish Internal Security Agency.

### **Macron gives Poland a hard time**

It is hard to believe that President Macron's advisers did not check Lyudmyla Kozłowska's background when compiling the list of guests. The very fact that she has been allowed to see the President implies that Macron has decided to give Warsaw a hard time once again...

Ten days ago, during the UN Climate Action Summit in New York, the French President referred to the fact that Poland had blocked an EU decision on attaining the zero carbon emission target by 2050.

"Let the young people who are now protesting all over Europe go to Poland to organise such rallies in order to help me convince all those whom I am incapable of convincing," he said.

His statement caused an outburst of anger among members of the Law and Justice Party. President Andrzej Duda's response also sounded impolite. Relations between Poland and France, which have been extremely poor ever since Warsaw broke up negotiations concerning the supply of French Caracals to the Polish army in autumn 2016, have recently reached a new low.

President Macron has never been to Poland, even though he has visited this region of Europe twice. A visit was originally scheduled for this spring, but the Law and Justice government eventually decided to postpone it, fearing that the French President might somehow help opposing parties to win the elections. No new date has been scheduled so far, and Macron himself continues to criticise Poland.

This at least demonstrates that Kozłowska's case is known in France. In February this year, Lech Walesa wrote a letter to present the matter to President Macron. In his reply, President Macron insisted that efforts must be taken to protect freedom of movement and freedom of speech.

**Link:** <http://wyborcza.pl/7,75399,25264146,macron-spotkal-sie-z-ludmila-kozłowska-szefowa-fundacji-otwarty.html?fbclid=IwAR3Y2w3pWskjZPi6C0tSRUXuUvLI3mlwkZ5BM4MwvQKgTfBRYPEXCO01CNg>

**The original title:** “Macron spotkał się z Ludmiłą Kozłowską, szefową fundacji Otwarty Dialog”