

Far-Right Extremists Charged Over Alleged Bomb and Poison Terror Plot in Poland

By Tim Hume
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The accused allegedly planned an attack on a mosque to “prevent the Islamisation of Poland,” a country where the Muslim community accounts for 0.1 percent of the population.

Two alleged right-wing extremists have been charged with plotting a Christchurch-style terror attack on a mosque to "prevent the Islamisation of Poland," the country's security agency has said.

Stanisław Żaryn, a spokesperson for Poland's Internal Security Agency, said the attack was intended to be carried out with explosives against "a specific religious object of the Islamic community," understood to be a mosque. He added the accused also planned to use poisonous substances in the attack.

Żaryn said the accused both held right-wing extremist views, with one having made public calls to “exterminate” Muslims, and the second having written a manifesto outlining his Islamophobic views, calling for migrants to be hounded by hooligans and intimidated with firearms and explosives.

The two men, who were under surveillance at the time of their arrest, have been charged with plotting a mass-casualty explosive attack, punishable by up to 10 years in jail. A third has been charged with the illegal possession of explosive precursors, punishable by up to two years in jail.

The writing of a manifesto echoed the strategy used by far-right terrorist Brenton Tarrant, who killed 51 worshippers at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand in March 2019.

According to Polish media, the indictment followed a raid on a Warsaw house in November 2019, a day before the annual Independence Day march in the city — a major event on the far-right calendar drawing tens of thousands, including many hooligans and extremists.

During the investigation, officers found four firearms, including a homemade submachine gun, along with ammunition, explosives, and bomb-making substances.

Far-right experts say that despite the prevalence of anti-migrant and Islamophobic sentiment in Poland since the arrival of hundreds of thousands of predominantly

Muslim migrants into Europe during the height of the migration crisis in 2015, the alleged terror plot is a relative rarity in the country.

“Extreme Islamophobia has become a part of mainstream political and media discourse, especially since 2015,” Rafal Pankowski, a sociologist at Warsaw’s Collegium Civitas and head of the Polish anti-racism group Never Again, told VICE World News.

“In this context, I’m not surprised that extremists tried to take the anti-Muslim violence to a new level, unfortunately.”

He said this was despite Poland’s tiny Muslim community accounting for about 0.1 percent of the country’s 38 million people — one of the smallest Muslim populations in Europe.

“The supposed danger of ‘Islamisation’ is simply absurd in the Polish context,” he said.

But while anti-migrant sentiment had resulted in numerous cases of anti-Muslim violence and hate speech in Poland in recent years, plots for violent, large-scale attacks have been a relative rarity — especially compared to the situation in neighbouring Germany, where a number of far-right terror attacks have been plotted or carried out in recent years.

“These plots are rare in Poland, to say the least,” Kacper Rekawek, an affiliated researcher at the Counter Extremism Project, told VICE World News.

He believed the reason for this was that, unlike Western European countries like Germany, where the governments took a more welcoming stance towards migrants, the prevailing mood in Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries was sharply against the new arrivals.

“For the whole of Central and Eastern Europe, when the migrant crisis erupted, I would say that anti-migrant sentiment was the dominant sentiment in the region,” he said.

“When this is the mainstream position, then your local extremists hardly have a cause to rally around. You don’t have a situation in which they would be striking against the government, or a certain elite, which isn’t doing what they want them to do.”

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/z3vqz8/far-right-extremists-charged-over-alleged-bomb-and-poison-terror-plot-in-poland>