

Belarusian Red Notice Abuses Raises Questions for INTERPOL

By, [Dr. Ted Bromund](#)

European news outlets [report](#) that Karyna Zdanevich-Spykhalska, a dual national of Belarus and Poland, has been released by an appeals court in Brescia, Italy, after being arrested at the Orio al Serio airport on February 1, 2026, as the result of a Red Notice published by INTERPOL at the request of Belarus. The underlying arrest warrant was reported issued by the Deputy Prosecutor of Brest, a city in southwest Belarus, in 2021.

The arrest warrant, and the resulting Red Notice, was almost certainly an act of political retaliation. Zdanevich-Spykhalska believes that the Belarusian authorities were likely persecuting her for her participation in protests near the Belarusian embassy in Warsaw, as the arrest warrant was issued immediately after those protests, and that she may have been identified through photographs on social media.

Zdanevich-Spykhalska faced the possibility that she would be extradited to Belarus. Zdanevich-Spykhalska undoubtedly benefitted from being accompanied by former Polish Vice-Consul in Milan, Ewa Adamczyk, from the representation provided by Italian lawyer Piero Parzani, and from an expert witness statement from lawyers from the office of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Belarus's opposition leader, who testified that she would face "torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, and persecution for her political views" if returned to Belarus. Even the Italian prosecutor's office opposed Zdanevich-Spykhalska's extradition. Well done to all of them.

In the circumstances, it is no surprise – but still commendable – that the Italian judges rejected Belarus's extradition request. The arrest highlights the fact that, as Italian lawyer Nicola Canestrini has [observed](#), in Italy "Interpol Red Notice, in itself, legitimizes pre-trial detention, in anticipation of a formal extradition request." In other words, Italy detains solely on the strength of a Red Notice. This risky practice is common in civil law countries. Couple this with the screening that Italy – like many countries – carries out on arriving air passengers, and the risks of traveling with an active Red Notice are obvious.

But Zdanevich-Spykhalska's Red Notice raises two concerns. First, she was accused of "intentional insolvency," or bankruptcy, in 2017–2018. But Red Notices cannot, except in exceptional circumstances, be published on "offences . . . deriving from private [i.e. commercial] disputes." Interpol also forbids the publication of Red Notices for bounced checks, a form of indebtedness. Finally, the CCF, INTERPOL's appellate body, [noted](#) as far

back as 2018 that “a large number of INTERPOL Member countries consider the inability to pay a debt or to fulfil a contractual obligation as civil matters by opposition to criminal offences.” It is remarkable that INTERPOL’s Notices and Diffusions Task Force (NDTF), responsible for screening Red Notices prior to publication, approved the Red Notice on Zdanevich-Spykhalska.

Second, there is the fact that the Red Notice came from Belarus, an egregious abuser of the INTERPOL system. Belarus’s reputation is so bad that it was made subject to “corrective measures” by INTERPOL in late 2023. As GYH representatives Sandra Grossman Esq., Charlie Magri Esq., and Dr. Ted R. Bromund [wrote](#) in the *Harvard International Law Journal* in March 2026, the corrective measures system is opaque, and its methods and effectiveness debatable. The Zdanevich-Spykhalska case certainly offers further evidence that Belarus is an abuser of the INTERPOL system. But it also raises the question of why a Red Notice based on a charge of bankruptcy, from a known INTERPOL abuser, was allowed to remain in INTERPOL’s system for more than two years after corrective measures were imposed on Belarus.

INTERPOL has [reportedly](#) been reviewing a large backlog of Red Notices – up to 50,000 of them – that were published prior to the creation of the NDTF. The status of that review is unclear. But the case of Zdanevich-Spykhalska makes it clear that it is not enough to review old Red Notices – the newer Red Notices (and indeed, other INTERPOL communications) from nations like Belarus that are now, or have been, subject to corrective measures since 2016 also need urgent review. Indeed, it is hard to justify retaining these Red Notices in INTERPOL’s system at all, and certainly not if those Red Notices have not been re-examined by the NDTF.

Fortunately, Zdanevich-Spykhalska’s ordeal appears to have ended happily. The reporting on her victory ends with a warning that travel, even inside the EU, can be risky, and if detained, it is “important to contact lawyers and human rights defenders as quickly as possible.” That advice, while far from happy, is certainly excellent.