

UN refugee agency 'deeply shocked' at stabbing death of 'deeply courageous' Polish mayor

The Mayor of the historic port city of Gdansk in Poland, has died in hospital after being stabbed at a televised charity event on Sunday, prompting the UN refugee agency, [UNHCR](#), to issue [a statement](#) on Monday praising him as “a deeply courageous, moral leader, who showed the way in helping refugees and migrants to integrate”.

Pawel Adamowicz, had been mayor since 1998, and according to Montserrat Feixas Vihe, UNHCR Regional Representative for Central Europe, “he received hate mail for his pro-refugee stance, but did not weaken in his belief that integration – which brings with it new talents, new skills, new colours, new languages, and a new mentality – was a winning proposition for everyone in his city.”

According to news reports, the alleged assailant, is a 27-year-old Gdansk native, with a track record of violence, who was released from prison only last month.

The UN Refugee Agency, is deeply shocked and saddened to hear that the Mayor of Gdansk, Pawel Adamowicz, has died – *UNHCR statement*

After attacking Mr. Adamowicz on stage, in front of hundreds of onlookers, he told the crowd that he held a grudge against the mayor’s former political party, after he was imprisoned in 2014 for violent offences. There is no evidence so far, that his attack on the mayor was politically motivated.

There has been an outpouring of grief across Poland following the assassination, with President Andrzej Duda, reportedly describing it as an “evil hard to imagine”. He has declared the day of the mayor’s funeral, a day of national mourning.

The UNHCR statement said that agency staff were “deeply shocked and saddened” at the news of the Mayor’s death.

Mayor Adamowicz launched the Gdansk “Immigrant Integration Model” after meeting Pope Francis in 2016, a model that has inspired other Polish cities, said UNHCR, adding that “our thoughts are with his family, friends and colleagues.”

In February last year, UNHCR [published this story](#) about Mr. Adamowicz’s efforts to show “a new kind of solidarity” with migrants and refugees, building on the city’s famous legacy as a birthplace of the struggle to throw off Communist dictatorship.

“For me, it is all about the moral arguments,” he told the agency, adding that the integration model, which was subsequently taken up by other cities in Poland, needed to be established.

“Most important are our Christian values, the humanitarian obligation to help people. I felt it was up to us to take a lead,” he said.