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Kiev to Abandon St. George Ribbons on Victory Day

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Many Russians worn the St. George ribbons on Victory Day.

The orange and black ribbon of St. George could be largely absent from Victory Day celebrations in western Ukraine this year after an institute proposed an alternative to the symbol, which has come to be associated with pro-Russian separatist movements.

In a statement published on its website, the Institute of National Remembrance asked Ukrainian citizens and media to use the European symbol for war victims, the scarlet poppy.

"The scarlet poppy is both a European and a Ukrainian symbol," head of the institute Volodymyr Vyatrovich said, according to the statement. "Our songs say that poppies bloom where Cossack blood has been spilled."

The new symbol was put forward by Kharkiv designer Sergei Mishakin and features the words "Never Again."

The St. George ribbon's origins date back to the reign of Catherine the Great and it is adorned

by many Russians on Victory Day, which falls on May 9, to commemorate the victory over the Nazis in World War II.

It was worn by pro-Kremlin politicians to show their support for Russia's annexation of Crimea and their disapproval of the interim government in Kiev, but also by separatists who have seized government buildings in the eastern Ukraine.

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