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Putin Nominated for Russia's Highest Honor, 'Hero of Russia' Title

By The Moscow Times

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Russia's President Vladimir Putin (front) attends a ceremony to commemorate the anniversary of the beginning of the Great Patriotic War against Nazi Germany in 1941 near memorials by the Kremlin walls in Moscow.

Against the backdrop of a recent surge in international criticism, journalists in Russia's Far East have appealed to federal lawmakers to award President Vladimir Putin with the country's highest honor: the title of "Hero of Russia."

A dozen journalists from both state-run media and small, independent publications in the Far East have asked State Duma speaker Sergei Naryshkin and Federation Council speaker Valentina Matviyenko for their support in pursuing the initiative, Rossiiskaya Gazeta reported Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Putin faces a wave of international criticism for what many Western leaders view as Russia's aggressive policies in the handling of the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. The U.S.

and the European Union have already imposed several rounds of sanctions to express their dissatisfaction with Russia's annexation of Crimea and what they see as Russia's support of the eastern Ukrainian.

The award is the nation's highest honor, generally associated with bravery in military service or an otherwise heroic feat.

Those behind the initiative to present Putin with the title say he has earned it through the annexation of Crimea, describing it in an open letter as his "heroic decision" to "support compatriots and brotherly peoples on the peninsula of Crimea" in "tough times."

The president deserves the title, "for preserving the territorial integrity of Russia, for the endurance and firmness of [his] patriotic views, for defending the interests of our nation in the entire world, [and] for the declaration of free expression in accordance with the law," the journalists said in the letter

In accordance with Russian law, it is up to the Federal Assembly to approve of the decision.

The title, which supplanted the "Hero of the Soviet Union" title in 1992, has been awarded to hundreds of recipients since its inception, according to the Yeltsin Presidential Library.

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