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Latvian President Berzins to Skip Moscow's Victory Day Celebrations

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Latvian President Andris Berzins will not be attending Victory Day celebrations in Moscow this May, his press service announced Tuesday.

A statement published on the presidential website said Berzins' decision was based on Russia's role in "worsening" the situation in Ukraine that had caused "the death and suffering of innocent civilians."

The heads of the two other Baltic states, Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaite, have already announced that they would not attend Victory Day celebrations in Moscow.

The May 9 festivities honoring the Red Army's success in World War II are not a happy event for many ethnic Latvians, who associate the date with the beginning of the Soviet re-occupation of their country following the defeat of the Nazis. Much of Latvia's Russian-speaking population nonetheless celebrates the event.

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