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Russia Will 'Vigorously Defend' Rights of Compatriots Abroad, Putin Says

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Valery Sharifulin / TASS

Russia will strongly defend the rights of its compatriots abroad, President Vladimir Putin said at the World Congress of Compatriots in Moscow on Wednesday.

Rossotrudnichestvo, the government agency for promoting Russia in the world, estimates that about 30 million Russian compatriots live abroad.

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According to Putin, Russophobia as well as other forms of "aggressive nationalism" are spreading in countries around the world.

"It happens in Ukraine, in the Baltics. In other countries. We know about this," the president was cited as saying by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

“History is being rewritten and a battle is being fought against monuments and the Russian language,” he added.

Putin vouched to decisively protect the rights and interests of compatriots, using “all existing bilateral and international mechanisms.”

The president’s comments came after he signed a decree to ease the process for compatriots to return to Russia and claim citizenship, Interfax reported earlier on Wednesday.

Putin estimated that about 800,000 compatriots had moved back to Russia in the past 12 years.

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