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Russia Returns to European Rights Body After 5-Year Suspension

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Council of Europe

Europe's top human rights body has confirmed Russia's return as a member after the country was suspended for five years over the annexation of Crimea.

Russia was suspended from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in 2014, leading Moscow to halt its annual payments to the organization in 2017. PACE voted this week to allow Russia's readmission, dividing its member states.

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PACE members voted 116-62 (with 15 abstentions) to confirm the Russian delegation's return to the Strasbourg-based body with full powers, it said in a resolution adopted Wednesday.

"The Assembly has always been committed to political dialogue as a means of reaching compromise and lasting solutions," the resolution said, stressing that PACE membership

means Russia can be held accountable on human rights issues.

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While it approved Russia's readmission, the PACE resolution also ordered the country to take steps to remedy several of its rights infringements.

It calls on the Russian authorities to release the 24 Ukrainian sailors captured in the Kerch Strait in November 2018 and pay its fees owed to the Council of Europe.

Russia must also cooperate with international investigators and prosecutors in bringing those behind the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 to justice; take action against violations of LGBT rights in the republic of Chechnya; and cooperate with an investigation into opposition politician Boris Nemtsov's murder, the resolution says.

Ukraine's delegation walked out following the confirmation, Interfax reported.

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