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Ukraine's Zelenskiy Simplifies Citizenship Process for 'Persecuted' Russians

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Volodymyr Zelenskiy **president.gov.ua**

Ukraine's new president has made it easier for Russians facing "political persecution" to become Ukrainian citizens in an ongoing passport battle between the countries.

President Volodymyr Zelenskiy last month ordered an overhaul of the process for granting Ukrainian citizenship in response to Russia expanding the number of Ukrainians who can apply for fast-track Russian passports. Russia's expansion amended President Vladimir Putin's earlier decree to simplify citizenship procedures for residents of separatist-controlled eastern Ukraine.

Related article: Russia's Putin Extends Passport Offer to Ukraine Citizens

A new decree published on the Ukrainian presidential administration's website Tuesday

simplifies the Ukrainian citizenship process for “Russian citizens who have been persecuted for political beliefs.”

Zelenskiy also simplified the naturalization process for those who “took measures to ensure Ukraine’s national security and defense.”

In July, Zelenskiy offered fast-track passports to foreigners who suffer from human rights violations and constraints on freedom in their home countries, as well as ethnic Ukrainians "from friendly powers" willing to help Ukraine's development.

Putin had earlier expanded the list of people eligible for fast-track passports by adding Ukrainians who once lived in Ukraine's Crimea region before it was annexed by Russia in 2014.

Kiev has been locked in a five-year conflict with pro-Russian separatists that has killed 13,000 people.

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