

Ukraine's Zelenskiy Bans 3 Pro-Russia TV Channels

By [AFP](#)

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy has banned three pro-Russian television channels in a move the presidency said was aimed at staving off Kremlin propaganda.

Kiev says it has become a regular target of Russian misinformation since 2014, when Moscow annexed the Crimean peninsula and backed separatists in eastern Ukraine, a conflict that has claimed more than 13,000 lives.

The ban came into effect in the early hours of Wednesday after Zelenskiy issued a decree imposing sanctions against pro-Russian lawmaker Taras Kozak and eight of his companies, including the three TV stations.

The channels — 112 Ukraina, Zik TV and NewsOne TV — are formally owned by Kozak, but are

also linked to powerful MP Viktor Medvedchuk, a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The decree late Tuesday made no mention of the reason for the ban, but Zelenskiy said on Twitter later his country supports freedom of speech, and "not propaganda financed by the aggressor."

Zelenskiy's spokeswoman described the three television channels as "a propaganda tool" and said they receive funding "from Russia."

"These media have become one of the tools in the war against Ukraine, so they are blocked in order to protect national security," spokeswoman Yuliya Mendel wrote on Facebook.

Some critics say the move, which came a day after another former Soviet republic Latvia dropped several Russian television channels, stifles free speech.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov denounced the ban, saying it violated international norms.

"We can only condemn these actions of the Ukrainian authorities," Peskov told reporters.

The banned television channels, which as of Wednesday had been dropped by most cable networks, hit out at what they saw as "political reprisals against objectionable media."

The situation in the country will not improve if Zelenskiy shuts "undesirable" channels, they said in a joint statement published on the 112 Ukraine television channel's website.

Medvedchuk told reporters that the ban was illegal. He said that "according to the Ukrainian law sanctions cannot be applied to Ukrainian citizens and companies."

Former comedian Zelenskiy came to power in 2019 on promises to end the war in the east of Ukraine.

But his failure to swiftly fulfil that commitment among others has seen his and his ruling party's approval ratings plummet in recent months.

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