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Biden Vows to Push Putin at Summit to Protect Human Rights

By AFP

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Carolyn Kaster / AP / TASS

U.S. President Joe Biden pledged Sunday to press Russian leader Vladimir Putin to uphold human rights when they meet in Geneva next month for their first summit.

The face-to-face meeting with the Kremlin leader comes amid levels of tension not seen for years, with Washington now dialing back its ambitions to little more than establishing a relationship in which both sides understand each other and can work together in specific areas.

"I'll be meeting with President Putin in a couple of weeks in Geneva, making it clear that we will not — we will not stand by and let him abuse those rights," Biden said in a speech referring to the summit, which is set for June 16.

The president delivered his remarks at an event ahead of Memorial Day, which honors fallen

armed forces members, and also spoke of his son Beau Biden, who died six years ago Sunday after a battle with cancer.

Since taking office, Biden has imposed new sanctions against Moscow over what US authorities say was the Russian role in the massive SolarWinds cyber attack and repeated meddling in the 2020 presidential election.

In addition, Washington has harshly criticized Moscow for the near-death poisoning and subsequent imprisonment of one of the last open opponents to Putin, Alexei Navalny.

Tensions are also high over Ukraine, where Russia already controls swaths of territory and recently massed troops on the border in a new show of force.

Yet another focus is on Russian-dominated Belarus, which caused an uproar this week after authorities forced an airliner passing overhead to land, then arrested an opponent to President Alexander Lukashenko who had been aboard.

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