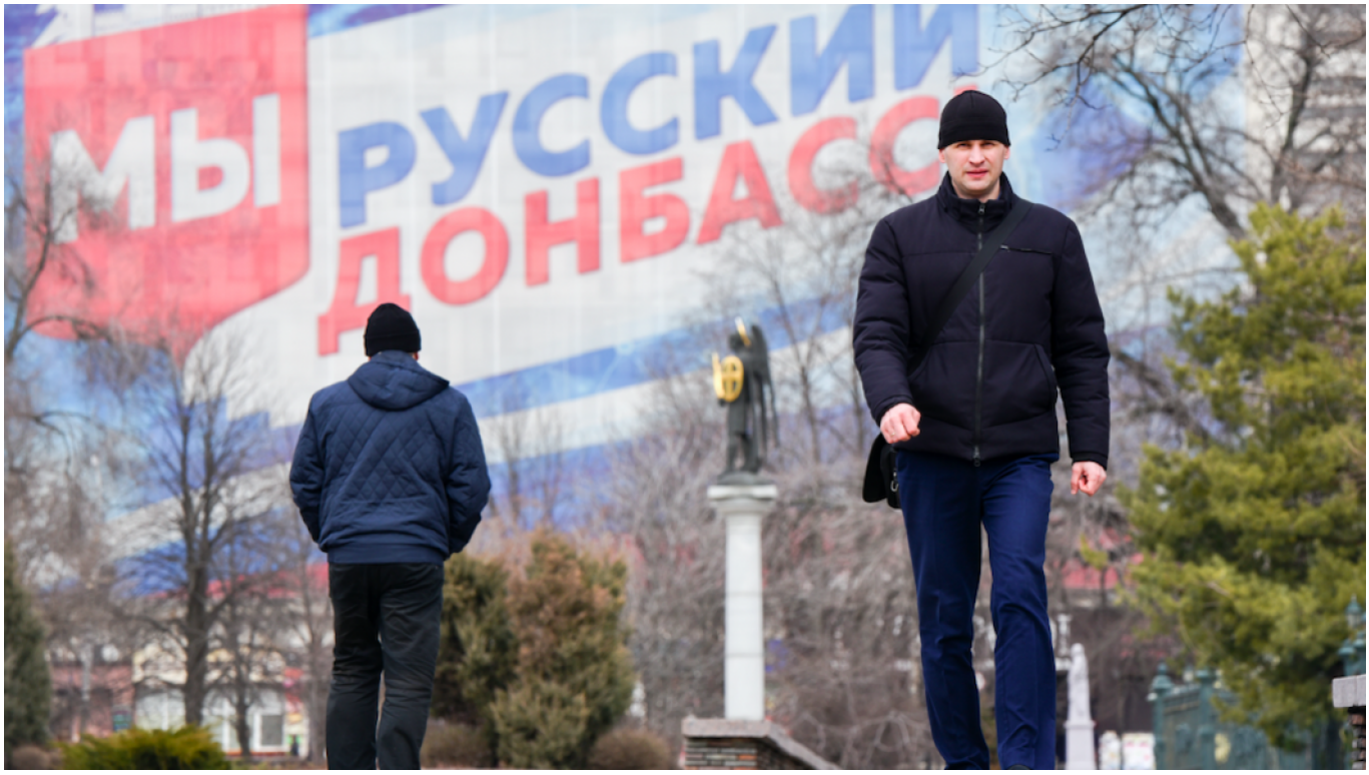
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EU Slams Russian Lawmakers' Bid to Recognize Separatist Ukraine Regions

By AFP

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Pro-Russian separatists have controlled the eastern Ukraine regions since war broke out in 2014. **Nikolai Trishin/TASS**

The EU on Tuesday condemned a bid by Russian lawmakers to have President Vladimir Putin recognize separatist regions in Ukraine as independent, saying it would violate the Minsk agreements Moscow had signed up to.

"The EU strongly condemns the Russian State Duma's decision to submit a call to President Putin to recognize the non-government controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine as independent entities," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell tweeted.

"This recognition would be a clear violation of the Minsk agreements," he said.

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Those agreements are contained in Western-backed protocols signed in 2014 and 2015 that aimed to end the conflict in the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine, where Russian-backed separatists rule two self-styled "republics" with no international recognition.

Russia's parliament earlier Tuesday urged Putin to recognize those regions as independent, arguing that it was Kyiv that was not following the Minsk agreements.

Separately, NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg also warned against any moves to recognize the two breakaway territories.

"If that happens, that will be a blatant violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty once again," Stoltenberg told journalists.

"There is no doubt that Donetsk and Luhansk is part of Ukraine within internationally recognized borders. So such a recognition will be a violation of international law."

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