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Putin Recognizes Independence of Pro-Russia Separatists in Ukraine

By AFP

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Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the decree late Monday evening. **Alexei Nikolsky / TASS**

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday recognized the independence of two separatist regions in eastern Ukraine in an emotional address on state-run television, despite warnings from the West this could trigger sweeping sanctions.

"I believe it is necessary to take a long overdue decision, to immediately recognize the independence and sovereignty of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic," he said.

State television then showed Putin signing mutual aid agreements with rebel leaders in the Kremlin.

At the end of an hour-long speech, Putin asked Russia's upper house of parliament, the Federation Council to "support this decision."

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The Russian leader also demanded that Ukraine end military operations against pro-Moscow rebels in the eastern part of the country, or face more possible bloodshed.

"We demand an immediate end to military operations," Putin said.

"Otherwise, all responsibility for the possible continuation of bloodshed will be fully on the conscience of the regime in power in Ukraine," he added.

The West had repeatedly warned Putin not to recognise Ukraine's rebels, a move that effectively buries a fragile peace agreement regulating the conflict.

But the Russian leader ignored these pleas. He told French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz shortly before his address was aired that he would recognise them.

Putin spoke for over an hour in a speech heavy with historical references questioning Ukraine's right to sovereignty and alleging the West had cheated Moscow.

"Modern Ukraine was entirely and completely created by Russia," Putin said.

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