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Malta Halts 'Golden Passports' to Russians, Belarusians

By AFP

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Maltese Relief Service set up crisis centre in Ivano-Frankivsk. **Zuma / TASS**

Malta said Wednesday it would temporarily stop giving citizenship and residency to Russians and Belarusians over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, suspending the so-called "golden passports" scheme for wealthy investors.

Malta's parliamentary secretariat in charge of citizenship said in a statement it had "suspended, until further notice, the processing of applications ... from nationals of the Russian Federation and Belarus."

"As a result of recent developments, the existent due diligence checks cannot be carried out effectively in the current scenario," it said.

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During compliance checks, however, it said it had not found anyone subject to the European Union's sanctions list.

Malta is one of a handful of European Union countries offering programmes in which high net worth foreigners can gain residency — and possibly eventual citizenship — through investing large sums.

A joint statement by Western leaders released by the European Commission Saturday said they would try to limit "golden passports" in which "wealthy Russians connected to the Russian government become citizens of our countries and gain access to our financial systems."

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