

Russia Quits Europe's Rule of Law Body, Sparking Questions Over Death Penalty

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The building of the Russian Foreign Ministry. [jaime.silva](#) (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Russia has announced it will withdraw from Europe's oldest rule-of-law body, the Council of Europe, sparking questions over the future of the Kremlin's moratorium on the death penalty.

The Kremlin placed a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, which remains enshrined in Russian law, as a condition of Council of Europe membership in 1996.

The Council of Europe [suspended](#) all Russian representatives from participation the day after President Vladimir Putin announced an invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24. The decision did not affect the European Court of Human Rights.

Former President Dmitry Medvedev said Russia's suspension from the Council of Europe was a "good opportunity" to reinstate the death penalty.

The move would also ban Russians from filing claims with the European Court of Human Rights.

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“Russia will not participate in the transformation of the oldest European organization into another platform for invocations of Western superiority and narcissism by NATO and its obedient follower, the EU,” Russia’s Foreign Ministry said in a statement Thursday.

“Let them enjoy talking to each other without Russia.”

The Foreign Ministry’s strongly worded two-paragraph statement did not indicate when Russia intended to withdraw from the 47-member organization.

Russia’s membership will expire at the end of fiscal year 2022, Senator Konstantin Kosachev, deputy chairman of the upper house of Russian parliament, [told](#) state media.

Kosachev said Russia’s exit from the Council of Europe entails a denunciation of its charter and the European Convention on Human Rights, which binds member states to abolish the death penalty.

The Kremlin echoed Kosachev’s assertion that Russia’s exit from the Council of Europe entails withdrawal from “all of its institutions.”

Human rights lawyer Pavel Chikov [said](#) Russia’s exit from the Council of Europe requires a new law to pass in parliament, after which its withdrawal would be finalized on Jan. 1, 2023, at the earliest.

“Only the committee of ministers can expel Russia earlier,” Chikov wrote on his Telegram channel.

Meanwhile, Chikov said the European Court of Human Rights will still be required to hear the estimated 15,000 claims filed by Russian nationals, as well as those lodged before Russia’s formal exit from the Council of Europe.

Chikov accused Russia’s Foreign Ministry and Senators Kosachev and Andrei Klimov of “making waves.”

He added that Russia’s exit from the Council of Europe does not automatically reinstate capital punishment.

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