

# South Ossetia Leader Wants Public Debate on Joining Russia

By [AFP](#)

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South Ossetia leader Anatoly Bibilov and Russian President Vladimir Putin at a March 2020 meeting in the Kremlin. **Mikhail Klimentyev / TASS**

The leader of Georgia's breakaway region of South Ossetia said Wednesday that public consultations should be held on joining Russia.

"We must, of course, ask the people for their opinion and ensure that the people express themselves on the possibility of joining the Russian Federation," Anatoly Bibilov, leader of the separatist region, said in live comments aired on Russian television.

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"It's not very difficult to do without delay. As they say, it's a technical matter," he added, talking of an "age-old dream" of the Ossetian people to join Russia, having been part of the

Soviet Union.

In 2008, Russia and Georgia fought a brief but bloody war over South Ossetia.

After the war, Russia recognized South Ossetia, and another separatist region, Abkhazia, as independent statelets and stationed permanent military bases there.

The full-scale offensive on Ukraine has sparked an outpouring of solidarity in Georgia.

On Saturday Bibilov said that South Ossetia has sent troops to Ukraine to "help protect Russia." The number of troops sent into neighboring Russia was unknown.

The following day Leonid Pasechnik, the head of Ukraine's Lugansk separatist region said it may hold a referendum on becoming part of Russia.

Denis Pushilin the leader of Donetsk, the other pro-Russian separatist "republic" in eastern Ukraine, has also spoken in favor of fusion with Moscow.

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