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Putin Ends Simplified Visas for 'Unfriendly' Countries' Officials, Journalists

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Russian President Vladimir Putin has scrapped simplified visa rules for officials and journalists from a number of countries Russia deems "unfriendly," a response to Western sanctions over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

According to the decree which comes into force on Monday, officials and journalists from some European Union countries as well as Norway, Switzerland, Denmark, Iceland and Liechtenstein will no longer be able to apply for visas to Russia through a simplified procedure.

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The state-run RIA Novosti news agency reported that Putin's decree ends visa-free entry to

Russia for EU citizens who hold diplomatic passports.

Putin has also instructed the Foreign Ministry to decide on imposing entry bans on foreign citizens or stateless persons who “commit unfriendly acts” against Russia, its citizens or its legal entities, RIA Novosti reported.

Russia’s list of “unfriendly” countries includes the European Union, the United States, Britain, Canada and Ukraine, among others.

The list was expanded after the West levied punishing sanctions on Moscow in the wake of Russia sending its troops into pro-Western Ukraine in what the Kremlin calls a “special military operation.”

Russian nationals have been effectively blocked from traveling to the West since the days after the Feb. 24 invasion, when Western countries banned Russian airlines from their airspace and vice versa.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to the deaths of thousands of civilians and displaced over 4.2 million people.

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