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Putin Hails Orban on Vote Win, Hopes to Build 'Partnership'

By AFP

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Russian President Vladimir Putin congratulated Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban on Monday after his party won a fourth term in office and said he hoped to further build ties, the Kremlin said.

"The head of the Russian state expressed confidence that, despite the difficult international situation, the further development of bilateral ties of partnership fully meets the interests of the peoples of Russia and Hungary," the Kremlin said in a statement.

The 69-year-old Russian leader has been increasingly isolated internationally after he sent troops to pro-Western Ukraine on Feb. 24.

The nationalist Hungarian prime minister has been one of his rare allies in Europe and in NATO.

Diplomatically, Orban fell into line with EU support for Kyiv despite his longstanding closeness to Putin.

But at home, Orban has struck a neutral and even anti-Ukrainian tone at times, refusing to let weapons for Ukraine cross Hungarian territory.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has singled Orban out for criticism over his reticence to take a tougher stance against Russia.

Official results from Hungary's general election on Sunday showed Orban's Fidesz party had won a fourth term in office by a much greater margin than pre-election polls had suggested, after a campaign overshadowed by the Ukraine conflict.

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