

Ex-Crimea Prosecutor Poklonskaya Slams Russia's Pro-War 'Z' Symbol

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Natalia Poklonskaya. **Russian State Duma Photo Service / TASS**

Natalia Poklonskaya has issued a harsh criticism of the pro-war Z symbol that has spread across Russia, the latest anti-war comments from the former Crimean prosecutor and onetime Russian lawmaker.

The Latin letter — first seen displayed on Russian military vehicles entering Poklonskaya's country of birth — has come to symbolize the public's support for Russian troops. The Z has been prominently displayed on buildings, flash mobs organized at schools and universities, merchandise sold online and even on the Russian Easter cake known as [kulich](#).

“This letter Z symbolizes tragedy and grief for both Russia and Ukraine,” Poklonskaya, who had staunchly supported Moscow’s annexation of Crimea, [said](#) in an interview with a popular YouTube channel Tuesday.

The comments sparked widespread criticism, including from Poklonskaya’s immediate boss at Russia’s state agency for international outreach, Rossotrudnichestvo, where she is deputy

director after serving a tumultuous term in Russia's lower house of parliament.

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Rossotrudnichestvo head Yevgeny Primakov on Wednesday [said](#) the letters Z and V are “symbols of the very liberation of Ukraine from the obvious evil of terrorists and bandits.”

“What I am saying is that it is dangerous to blindly worship any symbols — history does not like that,” Poklonskaya [wrote](#) in response to the criticism.

Poklonskaya's break with Russia's official line that it is carrying out a “special military operation” to “de-Nazify and demilitarize” Ukraine is practically unheard of for a sitting official.

Last week, she referred to Russia's invasion of her native Ukraine as a “catastrophe.”

“People are dying, houses and entire cities are destroyed [leaving] millions of refugees. Bodies and souls are mutilated. My heart is bursting with pain.”

“My two native countries are killing each other, that's not what I wanted and it's not what I want,” she said in a video address to an international forum.

Earlier in April, Poklonskaya said Ukrainian society has “changed” in the eight years since the war with pro-Russian separatists broke out in the east and that Ukrainians “would not greet Russia with flowers.”

“Ukraine is not Russia,” she told a popular YouTube blogger.

Poklonskaya, 42, was a prosecutor in Ukraine until 2014, when she resigned and was appointed prosecutor general of annexed Crimea. She was elected to the lower-house State Duma in 2016, but did not seek re-election in 2021.

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