

Russia Simplifies Citizenship for Ukrainians in Captured Territories

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Sophia Sandurskaya / Moskva News Agency

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a [decree](#) Wednesday simplifying the process of obtaining Russian citizenship for Ukrainians living in territories seized by Russian troops in southern and eastern Ukraine.

The fast-track citizenship option comes amid speculation that Moscow could establish permanent control over areas it has captured in its three-month invasion of Ukraine.

Russia first introduced a simplified passport scheme for residents of eastern Ukraine's separatist-controlled Luhansk and Donetsk regions in 2019. Over 200,000 people are estimated to have since obtained Russian citizenship.

Putin's new decree extends the scheme to people living in Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya and Kherson regions and enters into effect immediately.

Related article: [Kyiv Post: Moscow Says it Issued Nearly 200,000 Russian Passports in Ukraine's Donbass](#)

The southern region of Kherson is under the full control of Russian troops, while the southeastern region of Zaporizhzhia is partially controlled by Moscow.

"Citizens of Ukraine, the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR), or the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR), permanently residing in the territory of the DNR, LNR, the Zaporizhzhia region of Ukraine or the Kherson region of Ukraine, have the right to apply for citizenship of the Russian Federation in a simplified manner," the decree says.

Ukraine accused Moscow of violating international law with the decree.

"The illegal issuing of passports... is a flagrant violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as norms and principles of international humanitarian law," the Ukrainian foreign ministry said in a statement.

Putin initially [said](#) Russia had no plans to occupy Ukraine when he announced the start of the invasion in late February.

But in recent weeks, Russian forces have installed pro-Moscow "military-civilian administrations" in occupied areas and introduced Russian currency, media and internet services.

Andrei Turchak, a senior official from the Russian parliament, [said](#) earlier this month on a visit to the Moscow-controlled Kherson that Russia will remain in southern Ukraine "forever."

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