

Captured Fighters ‘Deserve’ Death Penalty, Top Russian Lawmaker Says

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Chairman of the State Duma Vyacheslav Volodin (R) meets with the Chairman of the People's Council of the DNR Vladimir Bidevka. duma.gov.ru

Russia's top lawmaker [said](#) Thursday that fighters sentenced to death in eastern Ukraine's pro-Moscow separatist territories "deserve" to die.

"The death penalty is the punishment these fascists deserve," Vyacheslav Volodin, speaker of the lower-house State Duma, said, using terminology that President Vladimir Putin has invoked to justify Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Volodin spoke a week after the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic [sentenced to death](#) two Britons and one Moroccan fighting alongside the Ukrainian army after a lightning-fast trial.

The UN Human Rights Office said last week that the three foreign fighters's trials amounted to war crimes.

Volodin wrote on his Telegram channel that “it would be right to retain” capital punishment in the breakaway republic of Donetsk.

“It’s especially relevant in wartime conditions.”

Russia itself placed a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, which remains enshrined in Russian law, as a condition of Council of Europe membership in 1996.

Its future came into question after the CoE [expelled](#) Russia over the war in Ukraine, just as Russia announced its [intention to quit](#) Europe’s oldest rule-of-law body in March.

Though Russia’s expulsion does not affect the European Court of Human Rights, a part of the CoE that has been a last resort for Russians seeking justice after being rejected by domestic courts, Putin [signed](#) a law Saturday rejecting its rulings made after March 15.

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