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Russia Suspends Gas Supplies to Latvia

By AFP

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Pipes and valves at a gas storage facility (Incukalns UGS) near Ragana, Latvia. **Toms Kalnins / EPA**

Russian energy giant Gazprom Saturday suspended gas supplies to Latvia following tensions between Moscow and the West over the conflict in Ukraine and sweeping European and U.S. sanctions against Russia.

The declaration came a day after Moscow and Kyiv accused each other of bombing a jail holding Ukrainian prisoners of war in Russian-held territory, with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky saying more than 50 were killed and calling the attack a war crime.

"Today, Gazprom suspended its gas supplies to Latvia... due to violations of the conditions" of purchase, the company said on Telegram.

Gazprom cut gas deliveries to Europe via the Nord Stream pipeline Wednesday to about 20 percent of its capacity.

The Russian state-run company had earlier announced it would choke supply to 33 million

cubic metres a day - half the amount it has been delivering since service resumed last week after 10 days of maintenance work.

EU states have accused Russia of squeezing supplies in retaliation for Western sanctions over Moscow's intervention in Ukraine.

Gazprom cited the halted operation of one of the last two operating turbines for the pipeline due to the "technical condition of the engine".

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has blamed EU sanctions for the limited supply.

"Technical pumping capacities are down, more restricted. Why? Because the process of maintaining technical devices is made extremely difficult by the sanctions adopted by Europe," Peskov said.

"Gazprom was and remains a reliable guarantor of its obligations... but it can't guarantee the pumping of gas if the imported devices cannot be maintained because of European sanctions," he said.

The European Union this week agreed a plan to reduce gas consumption in solidarity with Germany, where the Nord Stream pipeline runs to, warning of Russian "blackmail".

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