

Russia Introduces Harsh Punishments for Wartime Desertion, Refusal to Serve

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Federation Council

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday [signed](#) into law a bill introducing lengthy jail terms for wartime acts including desertion and "voluntary" surrender.

The move comes three days after Putin [declared](#) a "partial" military mobilization for the war in Ukraine.

The legal changes introduce the concepts of "mobilization, martial law and wartime" to the Russian Criminal Code for the first time.

Related article: [Putin Declares 'Partial' Mobilization Amid Ukraine Losses, Warns West of Nuclear Response](#)

Under the law, "voluntary" surrender is punishable by up to 15 years in prison. But a first-time offender "may be exempted from criminal liability if he took measures for his release,

returned to his unit or place of service and did not commit other crimes while in captivity," according to the bill [published](#) on the State Duma website.

Desertion during a period of mobilization or wartime will be punished by up to 10 years in jail, while conscientious objectors will risk up to three years in prison.

The law also mandates a punishment of up to 15 years in prison for looting during wartime and mobilization.

The bill — which was introduced by lawmakers from all parties represented in parliament in July — was swiftly passed by both chambers of the Russian parliament this week.

Many observers saw its quick passage through parliament as a precursor to Putin's partial mobilization announcement.

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