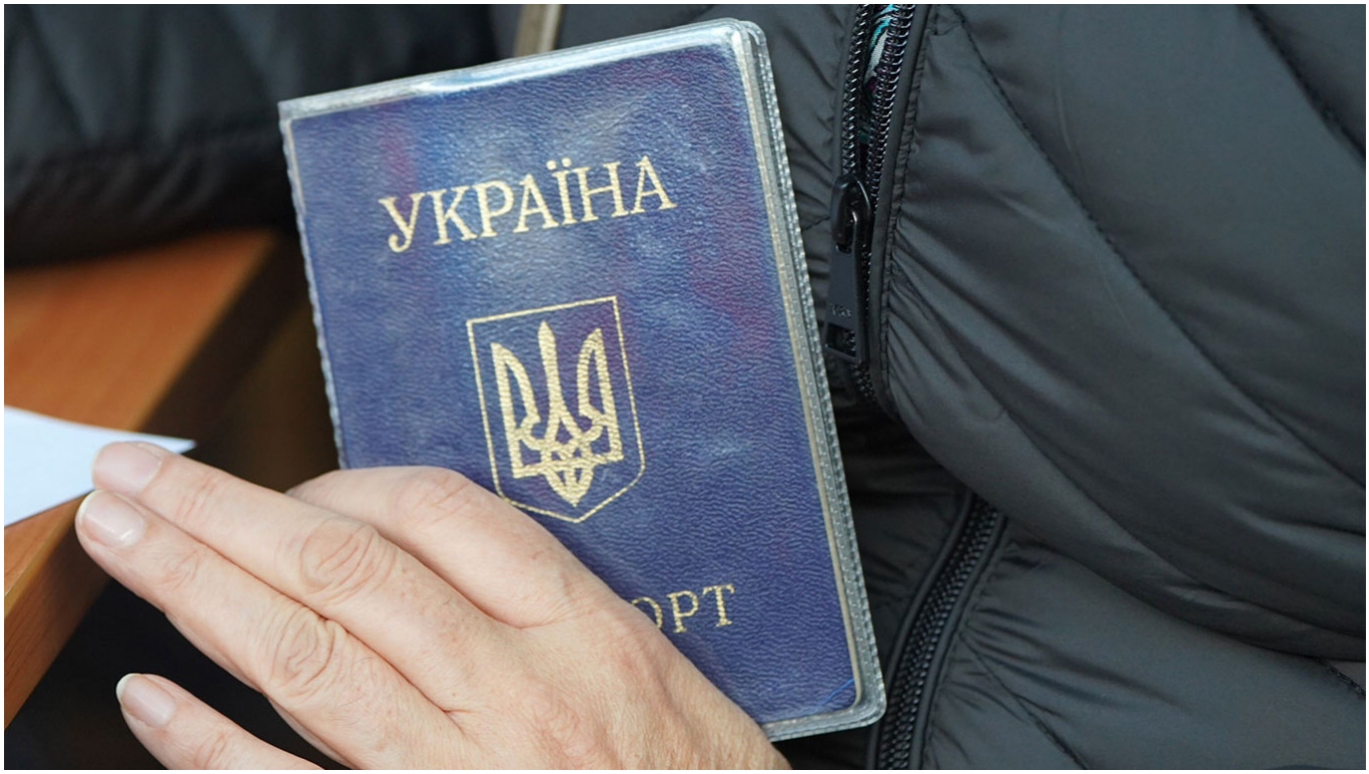
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Russia Gives Occupied Ukraine Residents 1 Month to Choose Allegiance

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Pelagia Tikhonova / Moskva News Agency

Ukrainians who have fled their country's occupied regions annexed by Moscow have one month to accept or reject Russian citizenship, Russia's Foreign Ministry said Tuesday.

President Vladimir Putin moved to annex Donetsk and Luhansk in eastern Ukraine and Zaporizhzhia and Kherson in the south on Friday following widely disputed referendums, incurring new Western sanctions. Russian lawmakers are scheduled to ratify treaties on the four regions' accession Tuesday.

Deputy Foreign Minister Yevgeny Ivanov said Russia's "passportization" process in the newly annexed Ukrainian territories will follow the blueprint used in Crimea, which Moscow annexed from Kyiv in 2014.

Crimeans had been pressured to obtain Russian passports within one month after Moscow annexed the Black Sea peninsula.

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Residents of Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Luhansk and Donetsk who are based in other countries "must make a choice within a month" on their citizenship, Ivanov told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency

He did not indicate whether Ukrainian passport holders in these regions would face penalties for rejecting Russian citizenship.

Putin's 2020 law banning foreigners from owning land in most parts of Crimea went into effect last year, threatening Ukrainian citizens with the prospect of losing their property on the peninsula.

Ivanov said Tuesday that "many" residents of the occupied Ukrainian regions have already obtained Russian passports and added that Moscow will "accelerate" the process for the remaining holders of Ukrainian passports.

Russia has carried out the Russification of captured territories after launching an invasion of pro-Western Ukraine this year.

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