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Russia Bans Entry to Irish Leaders

By AFP

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Irish Prime Minister Micheal Martin. **European Parliament / Flickr**

Russia said on Wednesday it had banned entry to more than 50 Irish officials including premier Micheal Martin in response to Western sanctions over Ukraine.

Among those listed was deputy premier Leo Varadkar, who is set to take back the premiership from Martin next month.

It also included Simon Coveney, who is Ireland's foreign and defense minister, and Finance Minister Paschal Donohoe as well as a number of other ministers and lawmakers.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said the measures against the 52 figures were taken following Ireland's support of EU sanctions against Russia.

"Acting under orders from Brussels, Ireland is conducting an aggressive anti-Russian propaganda campaign," said a Foreign Ministry statement.

It said Ireland has been seeking to curtail bilateral cooperation with Moscow.

In response, Coveney tweeted that Ireland "will be making no apology for being on the side of international law, the UN Charter, the side of Ukraine & the right side of history."

Western capitals have slapped Russia with a slew of unprecedented sanctions over its offensive in pro-Western Ukraine.

In March, in coordination with other EU members, Ireland expelled four diplomatic officials from Russia's embassy in Dublin, accusing them of espionage.

A week later, Russia expelled two diplomats from Ireland's Moscow embassy.

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