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European Parliament Recognizes Russia as a State Sponsor of Terror

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European Parliament / flickr

The European Parliament on Wednesday adopted a resolution recognized Russia as a "state sponsor of terrorism," and accusing its forces of carrying out atrocities in its invasion of Ukraine.

The move by the European legislators is a symbolic political step with no legal consequences, but MEPs urged the governments of the 27-nation EU to follow their lead.

"The deliberate attacks and atrocities carried out by the Russian Federation against the civilian population of Ukraine, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and other serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law amount to acts of terror," the resolution approved by EU lawmakers said.

The parliament said it "recognizes Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism and as a state which uses means of terrorism."

Kyiv has been calling on the international community to declare Russia a "terrorist state" over its invasion of the country, and the Strasbourg parliament's decision will likely anger Moscow.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky hailed the vote on Wednesday.

"Russia must be isolated at all levels and held accountable in order to end its long-standing policy of terrorism in Ukraine and across the globe," he said in a social media post.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova reacted simply by writing on Telegram: "I propose recognizing the European Parliament as a sponsor of idiocy."

Other pro-Kremlin Russian media were at pains to point out that the resolution had no legal effect. The European Union – unlike the United States – does not have a legal framework to designate countries as a "state sponsor of terrorism."

Washington has so far steered clear of putting Russia on its list of state supporters of terrorism, a move that would trigger further sanctions and would lift the immunity the U.S. currently extends to Russian officials.

The resolution, backed by 494 MEPs and opposed by 58, calls on Brussels to put the "legal framework" in place to add Russia to the EU's list of state supporters of terrorism.

"We called a spade a spade. Russia is not only a state sponsoring terrorism, but the state, which is using means of terrorism," said Lithuanian MEP Andrius Kubilius, who spearheaded the push for the resolution.

"The recognition of this fact by the European Parliament sends a clear political signal. Europe, Europeans do not want to remain passive, when their big neighbor violates all humanitarian and international standards."

The European Parliament resolution also urged the EU to include the Wagner mercenary group and troops loyal to Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov on the bloc's sanctions list of "terrorist" organizations.

AFP contributed reporting

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