EU Condemns Russian Elections in Occupied Ukraine

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A woman seen voting in occupied Donetsk. **Dmitry Yagodkin / TASS**

The European Union on Monday slammed elections in Russian-occupied Ukraine, warning Kremlin-backed officials and vote organizers that they would face "consequences."

Russia's Central Election Commission claimed that the pro-Kremlin ruling United Russia party secured overwhelming majorities in the legislative votes in Ukraine's Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, as well as in annexed Crimea.

"The European Union does not and will not recognize either the holding of these so-called 'elections' or their results," the EU delegation to Ukraine said in a statement.

"Russia's political leadership and those involved in organizing them will face consequences of these illegal actions."

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Ukrainian security services said they had compiled a list of "collaborators" helping to organize the voting and vowed retribution.

Brussels did not specify what type of punishment it planned to enact against officials for running the votes in occupied territories.

Elections in the four partially occupied Ukrainian regions are seen as the Kremlin's latest effort to solidify its control there, nearly 19 months since it launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022.

The elections in occupied Ukraine were held in tandem with regional and local elections across Russia proper over the weekend, which came ahead of next year's presidential election when President Vladimir Putin is widely expected to run for a fifth term in office.

Yet the Russian leader's key opponents have been forced into exile or jailed, while Moscow has criminalized any dissent over its invasion of Ukraine.

AFP contributed reporting.