

Top Russian Shaman Blesses Army Fighting in Ukraine

By [AFP](#)

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Russia's top shaman Kara-ool Dopchun-ool. **Video grab**

Russia's top shaman has given his blessing to the Kremlin's military offensive in Ukraine, praising troops and denouncing Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as an "enemy," state media reported Thursday.

Shamanism, a religious practice that involves connecting with the spirit world, is prevalent across the indigenous peoples of Siberia and resurged in popularity after being heavily repressed during the Soviet Union.

Kremlin critics say that ethnic minorities from some of Russia's poorest regions have been disproportionately affected by the offensive in Ukraine.

"I call for happiness, health and prosperity for the Russian people," said Kara-ool Dopchun-ool, head of a shaman group known as "Spirit of the Bear" and the elected supreme shaman of

Russia.

Video published by state news agency RIA Novosti showed him dressed in ceremonial attire, rhythmically banging a drum and chanting.

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"This is for those guys who are now fighting, performing the special military operation in the Donbas," he told RIA before starting the ritual.

"If the Ukrainian people realize that Zelensky is already an enemy of the Ukrainian people, if there is a choice next year, depose him, if a new person comes, everything will stop," he said.

The post of a supreme "elected shaman" is a recent innovation that has drawn criticism from some believers, who have called it an unnecessary bureaucratic role.

Kara-ool Dopchun-ool was elected to the post in 2018 following the first all-Russian congress of shamans in the republic of Tuva in southern Siberia.

"We always ask the Sun, the stars, the Moon to protect them," he was quoted as saying by RIA.

"And the Sun will go there and will stand there, above them, where it is dangerous, and protect our guys — this is nature, it helps man," he said.

Public opposition to Moscow's offensive in Ukraine has effectively been outlawed in Russia, where religious officials including Orthodox leader Patriarch Kirill have backed the Kremlin.

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