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Putin Further Eases Citizenship Process for Foreigners in Russian Army

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Russian soldiers during training exercises. **Alexander Reka / TASS**

President Vladimir Putin has signed a decree simplifying the process of obtaining Russian citizenship for foreigners who join the Russian army, according to a document published by the government Thursday.

"Foreign citizens who signed a [one-year] contract with the Russian Armed Forces or military formations or who are undergoing military service during the special military operation [in Ukraine]" are eligible for the simplified citizenship procedure, Putin's decree states.

The spouses, children and parents of foreigners serving in the Russian army will also be able to receive fast-track citizenship, according to the decree.

Russian authorities have one month to consider the soldiers' and their families' citizenship applications, the document states.

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Thursday's decree, which comes into force on the day of its publication, replaces previous decrees Putin issued after declaring a "partial" mobilization of reservists in September 2022.

His latest edict drops the requirement for foreigners to serve in the military for at least six months before applying for citizenship, as well as shortens the application procedure from three months to just one.

Russia's simplified citizenship process appears targeted toward citizens of poorer ex-Soviet countries who live and work in Russia.

The Central Asian countries of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have all urged their citizens not to join foreign armies after Russia invaded Ukraine.

Last year saw widespread and regular reports of police in cities across Russia rounding up migrant workers who recently received Russian citizenship but failed to complete their compulsory military registration.

Some of the migrants have been handed military summons on the spot, while others are forcibly taken to military enlistment offices, according to the reports.

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