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Russia Threatens 'Imminent Retaliation' for Latvia's Seizure of 'Moscow House'

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The Moscow House in Riga. **karel291 (CC BY 3.0)**

Moscow said Thursday it will seek retribution for Latvia's confiscation of a building it owns in Riga.

Latvia's parliament, the Saeima, voted earlier Thursday to seize the Moscow House, which has been funded by the Moscow Mayor's Office since its opening in 2004 as a cultural and activities center for Russian nationals living in Latvia.

In its decision, the Saeima said Latvia's security and intelligence agency concluded that the Kremlin used the Moscow House to "spread propaganda," and therefore threatened Latvia's national security.

"[The Moscow House] is an instrument of Russia's foreign policy, through which it deliberately spreads propaganda and pro-Kremlin interpretations of history to justify its aggressive actions," the Saeima said in a statement.

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Following the seizure, Russia's Embassy in Latvia slammed the move as an "unprecedentedly hostile stunt" and "de-facto state robbery" that "will have the most serious consequences for its initiators."

"The embassy demarched, notifying the Latvian side of imminent retaliation," the Russian diplomatic mission said on the messaging app Telegram.

It argued that the seizure would create a "highly dangerous precedent" and "send a clear signal" to other foreigners that their property in Latvia was not protected under international laws and treaties.

Russia could seek material damages and compensation from Latvia's government, the embassy wrote.

The Moscow House's tenants were given seven days to vacate the building, and Latvia's government has until March 31 to decide what to do with the property.

Latvia's public broadcaster LSM reported that the Moscow House will likely be auctioned off and its proceeds could be sent to Ukraine as aid.

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