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Latvian Police to ‘Screen’ Russian Voters Outside Moscow’s Embassy

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The Russian Embassy in Riga, Latvia. **LeeMarx (CC BY-SA 4.0)**

Russian nationals who visit Moscow's embassy in Latvia to vote in the March 15-17 presidential election will undergo police screenings, local media reported on Monday, citing the head of the Baltic country's police force.

"Access to the embassy will be controlled accordingly, residence permit and visa checkpoints will be set up in coordination with the State Police of Latvia," Armands Ruks, who heads the law enforcement agency, was quoted as saying.

According to Ruks, Russian authorities conduct similar checks when Latvian citizens go to vote at polling places in Russia.

The police chief added that the inspections, which are said to be part of efforts to "suppress any attempts to glorify Russian aggression," could reveal that some Russian nationals are living in Latvia illegally, and therefore these individuals might be deported from the country.

Last month, Latvia’s Justice Minister said that Russian citizens who live in the Baltic country and plan to vote in Russia's upcoming presidential election "essentially support" Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

She also implied that Russians could face criminal liability for justifying the war under Latvian law if they cast their votes at Moscow's embassy in Riga, where two polling stations are expected to open for the election.

Latvia, where around 25% of the country's population is made up of ethnic Russians, has become a hub for exiled Russian journalists, activists and other anti-war figures since Moscow launched its invasion of Ukraine and launched a sweeping crackdown on dissent.

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