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Moldova Slams Russia Over Polling Stations in Transnistria

By AFP

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Transnistria's Interior Ministry

Moldova on Monday said it would summon the Russian ambassador to show "its disapproval of the decision to open polling stations" in separatist Transnistria during the Russian presidential election.

Moldova last week downplayed talk of rising tensions after pro-Russian rebel officials in Transnistria appealed to Russia for "protection."

Russian news agencies reported that six polling stations will open on March 17, the main day of voting in Russia's presidential election, in Transnistria, compared to 24 in the previous Russian presidential election in 2018.

According to local pro-Russian authorities, 200,000 Russian citizens live in Transnistria.

Moldova's foreign ministry said it would summon the ambassador on Tuesday over the

matter.

"During the meeting, the Russian diplomat will be informed of the disapproval towards the decision to open polling stations in the Transnistrian region of Moldova," the ministry said on Telegram.

Moldova only allows the elections to be organized in the Russian Embassy of Chisinau.

Related article: Pro-Russia Separatists in Transnistria Ask Moscow for 'Protection'

Foreign Minister Mihai Popsoi told TVR Moldova last month that holding elections anywhere outside a diplomatic mission was banned, and any attempt to do so would be "extremely counterproductive."

Moldova — a former Soviet republic bordering Ukraine and Romania which has applied to join the EU — frequently accuses the Kremlin of trying to stoke tensions in Transnistria.

The Kremlin has around 1,500 soldiers permanently stationed in the region and has warned Ukraine and Moldova against attacking them.

Russia is holding a presidential election from Friday to Sunday that is set to hand President Vladimir Putin another six-year mandate despite the tumult triggered by Russia's campaign in Ukraine.

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