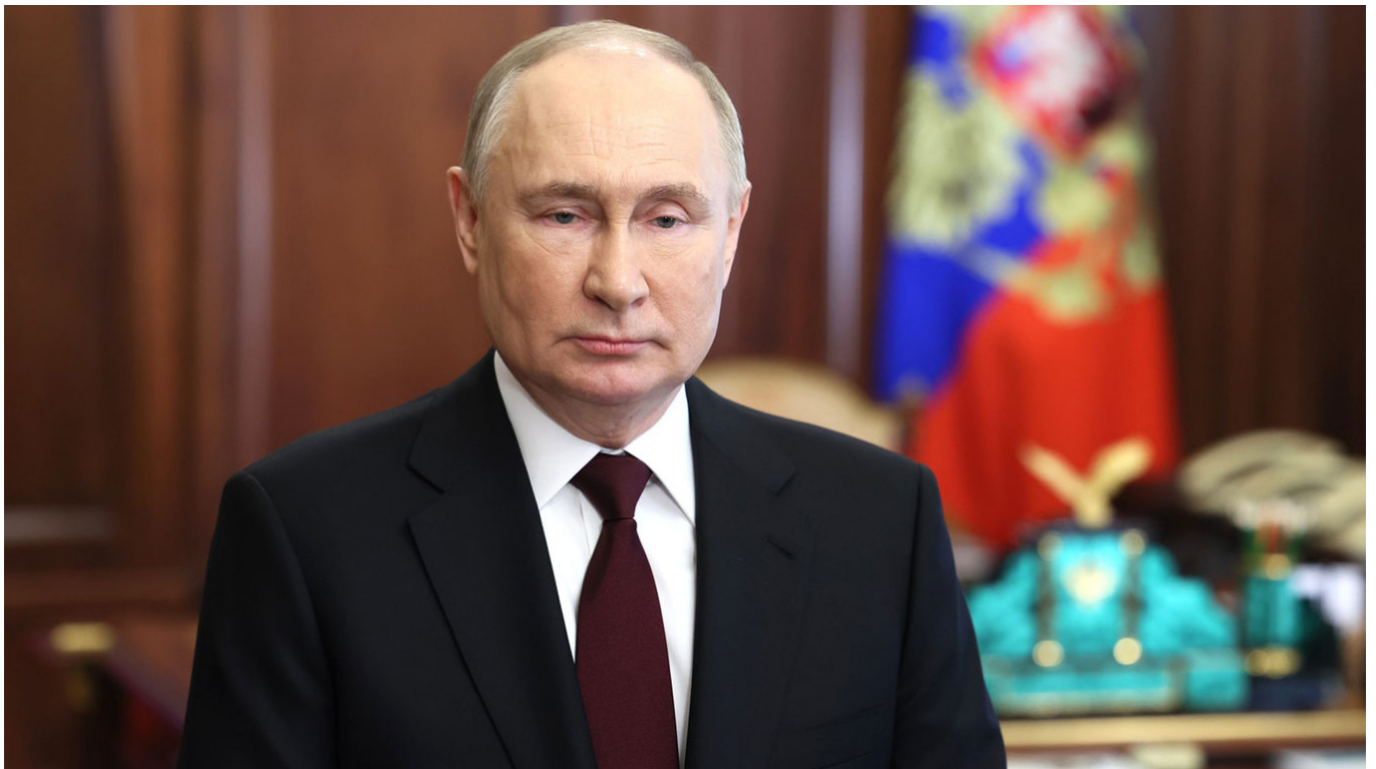


Putin Urges Russians to Vote at 'Difficult' Time for Country

By [AFP](#)

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Vladimir Putin. kremlin.ru

President Vladimir Putin on Thursday urged Russian citizens to vote in the March 15-17 presidential election, which he said comes at a "difficult" time for the country.

Putin is all but guaranteed to secure another six-year term this weekend in a vote the Kremlin says will show society is fully behind Moscow's so-called "special military operation" in Ukraine.

"You realize what a difficult period our country is going through, what complex challenges we are facing on almost all fronts," Putin said in an address to Russians on the eve of the vote.

"And to continue to respond to them with dignity and successfully overcome difficulties, we need to continue to be united and self-confident," he added.

Related article: ['Make the Young Fall in Love With Putin': Young Russians Pressured to Vote as Kremlin Demands Record Turnout](#)

Facing no real opposition on the ballot, Putin's likely victory in the race will allow him to remain in power at least until 2030.

"Let me be clear, participation in the elections today is a demonstration of patriotic sentiments," Putin added in the address.

The Russian leader also emphasized that the vote will take place in four Ukrainian regions that Moscow claims to have annexed in September 2022, as well as in the Crimean peninsula, annexed in 2014.

"Our fighters at the front will also vote. They, showing courage and heroism, defend the Fatherland and, participating in the elections, set an example for all of us," Putin said.

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