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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Schoolchildren Forced to Send Putin Birthday Wishes On-Camera

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Social media

Children in schools and kindergartens across Russia appear to have been forced to wish President Vladimir Putin a happy 72nd birthday Monday in closely matching videos, media outlets reported.

The opposition Telegram channel Mozhem Obyasnit said it found similar flash mobs on social media posts in at least 11 Russian regions. The independent news website Vyorstka said at least 30 schools posted congratulatory videos on their VKontakte social media pages.

Children were lined up to spell out the word "Putin" at a school in southern Russia's Rostov region.

"We're proud that the best president in the world rules over our country," the school said.

Embed:

At least one kindergarten in the Far East Primorye region held a lesson on the president's role.

Russian schools have undergone a series of transformations since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 including through militarizing education.

Putin urged educators last week to expand weekly classes that aim to instill patriotic values amid Russia's war in Ukraine — which are called "Important Conversations" — to kindergarteners.

The Putin birthday flash mobs also come as pro-Kremlin media reported that federal lawmakers were planning to criminalize "insulting" educators with heavy fines.

Outside schools, university students in the North Caucasus republic of Dagestan marked Putin's birthday by lining up to form the word "Power."

Pro-war bloggers shared a video of Russian soldiers loading up a multiple-rocket launcher with missiles inscribed with the phrase "For Putin."

And around 5,000 people were reported to have stood in a formation reading "Happy Birthday, President" with red umbrellas at the VDNKh exhibition center in Moscow.

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