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Latvia Bans Entry to Russian Designer Lebedev, Comedian Ponomarev

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Valery Ponomarenko and Artemiy Lebedev. **Pelagia Tikhonova / Moskva News Agency**

Latvia imposed an indefinite entry ban for pro-Kremlin designer Artemiy Lebedev and comedian Valery Ponomarenko, a month before he was due to perform in the country, Latvia's Foreign Ministry announced Friday.

Latvian authorities did not cite the specific reasons for blacklisting Lebedev and Ponomarenko, noting only that the former is "known in certain circles" and the latter was scheduled to perform in the cities of Rezekne and Dugavpils.

Lebedev, who was blacklisted by Ukraine for supporting Russia's full-scale invasion, called Latvian authorities "pathetic, petty and insignificant" in response to his travel ban.

Latvia previously blacklisted dozens of pro-war Russian public figures, including singer Shaman and "propagandist" comedian Maria Markova.

Riga restricted the flow of Russian citizens into the country after Moscow invaded Ukraine in

2022. The Baltic country extended those restrictions until March 2025.

Russia has maintained tense relations with the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia since the full-scale invasion. The three countries are among NATO's most vocal supporters of Kyiv.

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