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Russia Warns Citizens in S. Korea to Avoid ‘Mass Events’ After Martial Law Declared

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South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol delivers a speech to declare martial law in Seoul. **South Korean Presidential Office / AFP**

Russia's Embassy in South Korea warned its citizens to “refrain” from “mass events” after the country's president declared martial law in a surprise move on Tuesday.

“We urge Russian citizens in the Republic of Korea to remain calm, follow the authorities' recommendations, and refrain from participating in mass events, particularly those of a political nature,” the embassy said.

South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol declared emergency martial law, accusing the opposition of being "anti-state forces intent on overthrowing the regime" amid parliamentary wrangling over a budget bill.

"To safeguard a liberal South Korea from the threats posed by North Korea's communist

forces and to eliminate anti-state elements plundering people's freedom and happiness, I hereby declare emergency martial law," Yoon said in a live televised address to the nation.

"With no regard for the livelihoods of the people, the opposition party has paralyzed governance solely for the sake of impeachments, special investigations and shielding their leader from justice," he added.

Yoon described the imposition of martial law as "inevitable to guarantee the continuity of a liberal South Korea," adding that it would not impact the country's foreign policy.

The Russian Foreign Ministry has not yet officially commented on the events.

However, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova questioned the West's possible approach toward the situation in South Korea.

"Will they [Western countries] impose sanctions on Seoul? Or will South Korea be luckier than Georgia?" Zakharova said in a post on the Telegram messaging app, referring to the South Caucasus country that has been rocked by protests over its prime minister's move to suspend European Union accession talks.

With martial law imposed, all military units in the South, which remains technically at war with the nuclear-armed North, have been ordered to strengthen their emergency alert and readiness postures, Yonhap news agency reported.

The entrance to the National Assembly has been sealed, and MPs have been barred from entering the building, according to Yonhap.

The imposition of emergency martial law comes as Yoon's approval rating dropped to 19% in the latest Gallup poll last week, with many expressing dissatisfaction over his handling of the economy and controversies involving his wife, Kim Keon Hee.

AFP contributed reporting.

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