

Exiled Former State Duma Lawmaker Ponomaryov Charged With Coup Attempt

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Ilya Ponomaryov. [Social media](#)

Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) [said](#) Wednesday that it charged exiled former lawmaker Ilya Ponomaryov with attempting a coup and organizing a terrorist group.

State media [reported](#) that police searches were underway across nine Russian regions as part of an investigation into Ponomaryov. The FSB said it was carrying out "investigative actions" against Ponomaryov's "associates."

"The grounds to launch a criminal case were irrefutable evidence that [Ponomaryov] established the 'Congress of People's Deputies' political movement in Poland in November 2022," the FSB said in a statement.

"Ponomaryov presents the 'Congress of People's Deputies' to Western countries as a 'new Russian government in exile,'" it added.

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According to the FSB, the so-called “shadow parliament” has adopted more than 30 “unconstitutional legal acts,” including the “Constitution of a New Russia.” The law enforcement agency said more than 60 former Russian federal, regional and local lawmakers attended seven meetings between 2022 and 2024.

The charge of attempted coup carries a prison sentence of 12 to 20 years if convicted, while organizing a terrorist group is punishable by 15 to 20 years in prison.

Russian authorities blacklisted the Congress of People’s Deputies as an “undesirable” organization in 2023, putting anyone affiliated with it at risk of criminal prosecution.

In September, a Moscow military court [sentenced](#) Ponomaryov in absentia to 10 years in prison for “justifying terrorism” and spreading “fake news” about the Russian military.

Ponomaryov, the only State Duma lawmaker to vote against Russia’s 2014 annexation of Crimea, went into exile in 2016 after being charged with embezzlement. Since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, he has called for the violent overthrow of President Vladimir Putin.

Russian authorities have since labeled Ponomaryov a “foreign agent” and placed him on a list of “terrorists and extremists.”

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