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Putin Orders Ukrainians to 'Legalize' Immigration Status or Leave Russia by September

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President Vladimir Putin ordered Ukrainian citizens in Russia to either "legalize" their immigration status or leave the country by Sept. 10, according to a presidential decree published Thursday.

Ukrainians without "legal grounds to stay or reside in Russia" must leave unless they "settle their legal status" within the next six months and 10 days, the decree states.

The order appears to apply to Ukrainian passport holders from four partially occupied regions — Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia — that Russia claims to have annexed in 2022, as well as from Crimea, which Russia seized in 2014.

In recent years, Russian authorities have pressured Ukrainians in occupied territories to take on Russian citizenship. Putin claimed earlier this month that the government had "virtually

completed" the mass issuance of Russian passports in those regions last year.

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According to Interior Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev, 3.5 million Russian passports have been issued to Ukrainian nationals living in territories seized by the Russian military

Ukraine has denounced Russia's so-called "passportization" as "illegal" and a "gross violation of Ukraine's sovereignty." Western governments and human rights groups have condemned the move, while the EU does not recognize the passports as valid travel documents.

Putin's decree follows the introduction of a set of migration laws last month that made it easier for Russian authorities to deport migrants.

The latest order also requires foreign citizens who arrived in the occupied Ukrainian regions before Russia's annexation in September 2022 to undergo drug and HIV testing before June 10.

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