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Kremlin Condemns French Court Ruling Barring Le Pen From Office

By AFP

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Marine Le Pen. **Vox Espana**

The Kremlin on Monday criticized a French court's decision to bar far-right leader Marine Le Pen from running for office for five years, calling it a politically motivated attack on democratic norms.

A French court handed down the five-year ban after convicting Le Pen in a fake jobs scheme, casting doubt on her ability to run for president in 2027.

"More and more European capitals are going down the path of violating democratic norms," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters when asked to comment on the ruling.

"We do not interfere in France's internal affairs and never have," Peskov added. "But our observation of European capitals shows that they do not shy away from stepping outside the

bounds of democracy in the political process."

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A French parliamentary report published in June 2023 described a "long-standing" link between Le Pen's National Rally party and Russia. It also criticized "frequent contacts" between party figures and Russian officials, calling the party a "communication channel" for Moscow.

Le Pen dismissed the report as "dishonest" and "politicized."

Much of the scrutiny surrounding her ties to Russia stems from a 6 million euro ($6.5 million) loan her party took from a Russian bank in 2014, which was only repaid in 2023.

In March 2017, weeks before that year's French presidential election, she met with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin.

Ahead of their 2022 rematch, French President Emmanuel Macron warned that Le Pen was "financially dependent on Mr. Putin and his regime" and had always shown him "complacency."

Le Pen has since sought to distance herself from Putin and Russia following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

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