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Italy Summons Russian Ambassador Over 'Russophobe' and 'Hate Speech' List

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Italian President Sergio Mattarella. **EP**

Italy summoned Russia's ambassador on Wednesday after Moscow added Italian President Sergio Mattarella to a list of Western officials it accuses of using "hateful" and "Russophobic" speech.

The Italian Foreign Ministry called the move "a provocation against the republic and the Italian people," as tensions between the two countries deepen amid the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Earlier, Russia's Foreign Ministry published examples of what it described as "hate speech" against Russia and "Russophobic" statements by politicians and public figures of foreign countries.

Mattarella, who holds a largely ceremonial role, was said to have been included on the list for

comparing Russia's invasion of Ukraine to Nazi Germany's aggression during World War II.

Other European leaders, including German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, were also named on the list.

Related article: Italian Concert Organizers Cancel Gergiev Performance Amid Backlash Over Kremlin Ties

Relations between Russia and Italy have soured further in recent days after concert organizers near Naples canceled a performance by conductor Valery Gergiev over his ties to the Kremlin.

Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has been a vocal supporter of Ukraine, and Italy hosted a major recovery conference for the country earlier this month.

Italy has also taken in thousands of Ukrainian refugees since Russia launched its full-scale invasion in 2022.

AFP contributed reporting.

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