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Russia to Quit Europe's Anti-Torture Convention

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Russian prisoners. **Sergei Fadeichev / TASS**

Update: President Vladimir Putin finalized Russia's withdrawal from the European convention for the prevention of torture on Sept. 29.

Russia will formally withdraw from Europe's convention for the prevention of torture, a move some rights advocates say is largely symbolic given the country's already worsening human rights record.

Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin signed a decree on Saturday proposing that President Vladimir Putin submit the withdrawal to the State Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament. The decree was first made public on Monday evening.

The European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, adopted in 1987, allows inspections of detention facilities across member states. Russia ratified the treaty in 1998, two years after joining the Council of Europe, which promotes democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Russia quit the Council of Europe in March 2022 after being suspended over its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Later that year, it also withdrew from the European Convention on Human Rights, ending its obligation to recognize rulings from the European Court of Human Rights.

Russia remains a party to the UN Convention Against Torture, which it ratified in 1985.

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The rights group Crew Against Torture warned the withdrawal could worsen conditions in Russian prisons. It noted that during Russia's 27 years in the convention, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture made 30 visits and drafted 27 reports — only four of which Moscow agreed to publish.

The NGO said the convention helped ease overcrowding, improve conditions in penal colonies and secure better protections for some inmates.

"Russia's withdrawal... marks the final dismantling of the European human rights monitoring system in the country. The decision deprives prisoners of the last formal international protections and paves the way for further declines in human rights conditions," the group said on Telegram.

No date has been set for Russia's formal exit from the treaty.

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