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Navalnaya Warns EU Against Tourist Visa Ban for Russians

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Yulia Navalnaya. **Julien Nizet / belgium24.eu**

Yulia Navalnaya urged the European Union on Wednesday not to impose restrictions on tourist visas for Russian citizens, arguing that such a move would harm ordinary people and feed into Kremlin propaganda.

The Italian news agency ANSA reported this week that EU members were weighing stricter tourist visa rules after a spike in Russian applications over the summer. EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas has said the bloc's 19th sanctions package "should be ready" by the end of September.

In a letter to Kallas, Navalnaya argued that President Vladimir Putin does not represent the whole of Russia and that ordinary "Russian citizens are not the culprits of the war."

Navalnaya, who is the widow of the late activist Alexei Navalny, argued a possible tourist visa ban would harm Russians "who still remain connected to Europe" far more than the elites on whom Putin relies.

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“There are no grounds to believe that pressure on all citizens of the country can influence the opinion of Russia’s leadership and its president,” she wrote.

Instead, Navalnaya urged Brussels to expand targeted sanctions against Putin’s inner circle.

“The potential for targeted personal sanctions against Vladimir Putin’s closest associates and members of his elite remains far from fully utilized,” she said, naming figures such as conductor Valery Gergiev, billionaire Leonid Mikhelson and others tied to the Kremlin or profiting from the war.

She added that broad restrictions on Russian travelers would play into the Kremlin’s isolationist narrative. “For the purpose of achieving peace in Europe, it is counterproductive to assist Russian authorities in isolating Russian society,” Navalnaya wrote.

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