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Europe's Top Rights Body to Create 'Platform for Dialogue' With Exiled Russian Opposition

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Vladimir Kara-Murza **CHRISTOPHE PETIT TESSON / EPA / TASS**

Europe's top human rights body has approved the creation of a Platform for Dialogue with Russian democratic forces in exile, it reported Thursday.

The new platform will seek to strengthen Russian democratic movements' capacity to "bring about sustainable democratic change in Russia and help achieve a lasting and just peace in Ukraine, alongside ensuring the responsibility of Russian actors for the international crimes committed," the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe (PACE) said in a statement.

The Assembly voted with 80 votes in favor, none against and four abstentions, Kremlin critic Vladimir Kara-Murza said.

"Many parliamentarians emphasized that the best guarantee of a peaceful and secure Europe is a democratic Russia," he added.

PACE has not yet decided on the exact composition of the Russian delegation.

It said participants will “be able to hold two-way exchanges with the Assembly on issues of common concern” and “to attend meetings of selected committees during part-sessions.”

“Russian democratic forces do not have a single, unified political structure,” the Assembly said in its statement, encouraging “Russian groups and initiatives in exile to join forces to advocate for democratic change in Russia.”

Russia was expelled from PACE and its parent organization, the Council of Europe, in March 2022 following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, ending 26 years of membership.

At the time, the Assembly said it “remains on the side of the victims of this unprovoked war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine,” and expressed solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

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