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Ukraine Urges Venice Biennale to Exclude Russia

By AFP

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The Pavilion of Russia at the 59th Venice Art Biennale in April 2022. **Vincenzo Pinto / AFP**

Ukraine on Sunday called on the Venice Biennale to keep Russia out of the prestigious art event after organizers said it could participate for the first time since launching its all-out invasion in 2022.

"We call on the organizers of the Venice Biennale to reconsider their decision to allow the Russian Federation to return and to maintain the principled position demonstrated in 2022–2024," Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga and Culture Minister Tetyana Berezhna said in a statement.

Organizers of the event said on Wednesday that they would allow Russia to take part in the exhibition this year, which runs from May 9 to Nov. 22.

"La Biennale di Venezia is an open institution" and "rejects any form of exclusion or

censorship of culture and art," they said in a statement.

Their decision was met with criticism, including from Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's government.

Italy's Culture Ministry said the move was made "entirely independently by the Biennale Foundation, despite the Italian government's opposition."

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The Venice Biennale is an international cultural organization founded in 1895 that presents major cultural festivals and runs its flagship art exhibition and architecture exhibition on alternating years.

Participating countries set up pavilions in Venice. The art biennial typically attracts more than 600,000 visitors over its seven-month run.

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