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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Dozens of Countries Pledge Support for Special Tribunal to Prosecute Russian Leaders for Ukraine Invasion

By AFP

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Vladimir Putin smiles and waves. **AFP**

A coalition of 34 European nations, along with Australia, Costa Rica and the EU, has said they will join a special tribunal tasked with prosecuting Russia's leadership for the "crime of aggression" against Ukraine.

The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers approved a resolution laying the legal groundwork for the court during a meeting on Friday.

The tribunal aims to fill a jurisdictional gap in international law, as the International Criminal Court (ICC) currently lacks the authority to prosecute the act of starting the war itself, even as it pursues arrest warrants for President Vladimir Putin over specific war crime accusations.

"The time for Russia to be held to account for its aggression is fast approaching," said Alain

Berset, secretary general of the Council of Europe. “Action now needs to be taken to follow up on this political commitment by securing the tribunal’s functioning and funding.”

The agreement follows an accord signed last year by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and the Council of Europe.

While the tribunal was initially intended to begin operations this year, Friday’s resolution focuses on securing the necessary international consensus to allow the court to eventually try high-ranking Russian officials, including Putin.

The list of signatories includes all 27 EU member states except for Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Malta. Other Council of Europe members that have yet to join include Turkey, Serbia, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

Russia was expelled from the Council of Europe shortly after launching its full-scale invasion in February 2022.

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