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Russia Pulls Ambassador From Armenia After Putin Warns Against EU Alignment

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Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Vladimir Putin. **kremlin.ru**

Russia's Foreign Ministry said Saturday that it recalled its ambassador to Armenia for "consultations," a day after President Vladimir Putin warned the South Caucasus country against aligning with the European Union.

"The Russian ambassador to the Republic of Armenia, S. Kopyrkin, has been recalled to Moscow for consultations about steps taken by the Armenian leadership on a rapprochement with the European Union, thus undermining cooperation within the Eurasian Economic Union," the ministry said in an official statement, referring to the Moscow-led regional customs union.

At a summit in Kazakhstan on Friday, Putin invoked what he called the "Ukrainian scenario" to warn Armenia against pursuing closer ties with the EU.

The Russian leader called on Armenia to hold a referendum on its economic future "as soon as possible," emphasizing that Armenia must choose between the EU and the Eurasian Economic

Union, declaring it "impossible to reconcile the two."

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Friction between traditional allies Russia and Armenia has grown since Azerbaijan regained control of the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023. Armenia accused Russia and its peacekeeping forces of failing to deter Baku's military offensive and, in 2024, froze its participation in a Moscow-led regional security bloc.

Putin previously warned Armenia that closer European integration carries the same risks faced by Ukraine, which Russia invaded in February 2022.

Over the past month, Russia has restricted the sale or imports of Armenian produce, flowers, mineral water and alcoholic products over alleged health and safety violations, though the restrictions increasingly look like a coordinated pressure campaign ahead of parliamentary elections in Armenia next month, where Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Civil Contract party faces a challenge from an array of pro-Russian opposition groups.

This week, Russia also threatened to rip up a 2013 bilateral agreement guaranteeing Armenia duty-free access to natural gas and oil if it continues to pursue closer ties with the European Union.

Pashinyan shrugged off the energy threats, arguing that EU membership would eventually bring in far more money than Armenia would lose from higher energy costs imposed by Russia.

AFP contributed reporting.

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