

UNGA TO VOTE ON RUSSIA'S HRC SUSPENSION

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

India's vote at the UN General Assembly will be watched closely, as a resolution sponsored by the U.S., U.K. and other countries seeks to suspend Russia's membership of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), where it is an elected member, after the discovery of mass graves and human rights excesses in the Ukrainian city of Bucha.

Thus far, India has abstained on at least 10 resolutions critical of Russia at the UN Security Council, UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

On Thursday, the UNGA is expected to vote on the resolution calling for the suspension of Russia from the Human Rights Council, after which members will make their statements on the situation in Ukraine.

The vote will follow after a series of foreign officials and Ministers from countries that are part of the U.S.-EU led sanctions regime visited Delhi in the past two weeks, calling on India to change its position on Ukraine.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov had also visited Delhi last week, praising India for its "independent" position.

When asked about India's vote on the UNGA resolution, officials said that while India had called for an "independent enquiry" into the killings in Bucha, an investigation team had yet to be constituted and it might be more difficult to vote until there was a definitive conclusion about who was responsible for the excesses.

According to an official, the vote is not just about Russia and Ukraine, but the principle of whether such a procedure should be used to suspend an elected member at the UN body.

Toughening stance

In what was seen as a toughening of its stance, India on Tuesday condemned the killings of civilians in Bucha and called for an independent enquiry into them, although its statement at the UNSC didn't directly refer to Russia.

As a result, the vote, the first such resolution since Libya was suspended by a unanimous UNGA decision in 2011, will be watched keenly for whether India would change its stand from the previous abstentions. If India abstains in this case, the vote would work in favour of the U.S.-led resolution which needs a two-thirds majority of the "present and voting" members in the UNGA on Thursday.

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