

UKRAINE REFERENDUM RESULTS POINT TO RUSSIA ANNEXATION

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: UNO and its various Agencies

Collateral damage: Ukrainian rescue workers carrying a bag with a woman's body after a Russian attack on a school on Wednesday. AP/Leo Correa

Russian-installed officials in four breakaway regions of Ukraine reported huge majorities of votes in favour of joining Russia as the U.S. planned a UN resolution condemning the referendums as "shams" and Russia remained defiant.

The U.S. was also preparing a new round of sanctions against Russia should it annex Ukrainian territory and a \$1.1 billion arms package for Ukraine that will be announced soon, U.S. officials said on Tuesday.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the U.S. and its allies remained committed to European energy security, after Germany, Sweden and Denmark said attacks caused major leaks from two Russian energy pipelines. It remained far from clear who might be behind the leaks.

Hastily arranged votes took place over five days in the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, and in Zaporizhzhya and Kherson to the south, that together make up about 15% of Ukrainian territory.

Vote tallies from complete results on Tuesday in the four provinces ranged from 87% to 99.2% in favour of joining Russia, according to Russia-appointed officials.

The head of the upper house of the Russian Parliament said the chamber might consider annexation on October 4. "The results are clear. Welcome home, to Russia!" Dmitry Medvedev, a former President who serves as deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council and an ally of President Vladimir Putin, said.

Within the breakaway territories, Russian-installed officials took ballot boxes from house to house in what Ukraine and the West said was an illegitimate, coercive exercise to create a legal pretext for Russia to annex the four regions.

UN resolution

"This farce in the occupied territories cannot even be called an imitation of a referendum," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in video address late on Tuesday.

The U.S. will introduce a resolution at the UN Security Council calling on member states not to recognise any change to Ukraine and obligating Russia to withdraw its troops, U.S. envoy Linda Thomas-Greenfield said.

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