

Ukraine war: MEPs push for special tribunal to punish Russian crimes

- Special international tribunal needed to deal with crime of aggression against Ukraine
- New tribunal would fill legal vacuum in international criminal justice
- International legal action would send clear signal to Russia and the world



Parliament insists that the Russian leadership must answer for its crimes in Ukraine © AFP/Yasuyoshi CHIBA

In a resolution adopted on Thursday, MEPs demand the Russian political and military leadership be held accountable for the crime of aggression against Ukraine.

Parliament says the atrocities committed by Russian forces in Bucha, Irpin and many other Ukrainian towns reveal the brutality of the war and underscore the importance of coordinated international action to bring those accountable to justice under international law. MEPs urge the EU, in close cooperation with Ukraine and the international community, to push for the creation of a special international tribunal to prosecute Russia's political and military leadership and its allies.

Establishing a tribunal would, MEPs argue, fill a vacuum in international criminal justice and complement the investigative efforts of the International Criminal Court, as it currently cannot investigate the crime of aggression when it comes to Ukraine.

Political and military leadership in Russia and Belarus must be held accountable

While noting that the exact modalities and composition of the special tribunal remain to be determined, MEPs stress that it must have jurisdiction to investigate not only Vladimir Putin and the political and military leadership of Russia, but also Aliaksandr Lukashenka and his cronies in Belarus.

They also emphasise that EU preparatory work on the special tribunal should begin immediately and focus on building the arrangements for the court in cooperation with Ukraine. Ukrainian and international authorities must be supported in securing evidence to be used in the future.

Parliament strongly believes that the establishment of a special tribunal would send a very clear signal to both Russian society and the international community that President Putin and the Russian leadership at large can be convicted for the crime of aggression in Ukraine. MEPs point out that it is no longer feasible for the Russian Federation under Putin's leadership to return to business as usual with the west.

The text was adopted by 472 votes in favour, 19 against with 33 abstentions.

Further information

The adopted text will be available here (19.01.2023)

Watch a video recording of the debate (17.01.2023)

Study: "Tribunal for the crime of aggression against Ukraine - a legal assessment"

Press release: "European Parliament declares Russia to be a state sponsor of terrorism" (23.11.2022)

Press release: "Ukraine: MEPs want a special international tribunal for crimes of aggression" (19.05.2022)

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