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Most Western firms stay in Russia

Russia has never pressured foreign companies to leave the country amid Western sanctions and the vast majority have stayed, President Vladimir Putin stated on Wednesday at the Russia Calling! forum in Moscow.

Putin noted that despite political pressure from their governments, many companies from the US and Western Europe continue to operate in Russia.

“We never pressured anyone to leave our market,” Putin said. “Half of those firms continue to operate in the country as they did before [sanctions]. Some have transferred operations to local management under their control, and only about a quarter [of such firms] have left or are in the process of leaving the country’s economy,” he added.

According to the president, breaking with Russia has played a major role in the economic problems that the EU countries are currently facing. In particular, this is due to the loss of stable Russian energy supplies at reasonable prices, as well as the opportunity to sell their products and supply components to the Russian market, and to use logistics routes, he explained.

The EU also lost the opportunity to use its currency for settlements, which significantly cuts into profits in the bloc’s economy, Putin added.

“In particular, large companies [in the EU] are closing... others are suffering losses. Glass, chemical, fertilizer production, and agriculture are suffering serious losses because... they have lost the Russian market,” he pointed out.

Putin emphasized that Germany’s economy in particular has suffered the biggest blow due to sanctions imposed on Russia. “Entire enterprises are closing” due to the loss of Russian energy and raw materials, affecting the country’s most important sector of the economy – the automobile industry, according to the Russian president.

Putin said many Western countries have shown themselves as “unreliable partners,” pointing out that many businesses and entire industries in Russia faced serious challenges due to sanctions and the exit of foreign firms.

Despite this, “*our doors are always open*,” the president told attendees at the forum.

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Georgia accuses West of trying to orchestrate Maidan-like coup

Up to a third of those identified at recent protests in Georgia’s capital Tbilisi have turned out to be foreign nationals, according to the executive secretary of the ruling Georgian Dream party, Mamuka Mdinardze.

Anti-government protests broke out in the Georgian capital last week after Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze announced that he would be suspending accession talks with the EU due to Brussels’ “constant blackmail and manipulation” of the former Soviet republic’s domestic politics.

Pro-EU protesters have since taken to the streets and repeatedly clashed with law enforcement, setting off fireworks and throwing Molotov cocktails at riot police, as well as setting fire to the parliament building. Law enforcement officials have in turn deployed tear gas and water cannons in an attempt to disperse the protesters, over 200 of whom have reportedly been arrested.

More than 110 police officers have also been injured during the protests.

Speaking at a briefing on Tuesday, Mdinardze claimed that “30% of the people who were identified at the protests in Tbilisi are citizens of other countries.”

“What’s going on? Someone has to explain this strangeness. Why are these foreign citizens so upset after our decision?” the politician asked, noting that there were many Russian citizens among the detained protesters, as well as people from the US, the UK and the Netherlands.

Following the escalation of hostilities between Moscow and Kiev in 2022, Georgia became one of the primary destinations for Russian citizens who disagreed with Russia’s policies.

Meanwhile, Kobakhidze slammed the protests as an “attack on the constitutional order” in Georgia, and blamed the civil unrest on “EU politicians and their agents.” He also claimed that the West was trying to orchestrate a Maidan-style revolution in Georgia, referring to the US-backed coup in Kiev in 2014, which ousted the country’s democratically elected president and precipitated the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

The Georgian leader has said that those behind the protests will not be able to realize the Maidan scenario in his country because, “unlike Ukraine in 2013, Georgia is an independent state with strong institutions and, most importantly, experienced and wise people.”

Moscow has also compared the anti-government protests in Georgia to the Maidan coup, with Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov stating that the unrest exhibits “all the signs of an attempt to carry out an ‘orange revolution’.”

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