



Hungary Blocked Joint EU Statement on Putin's Arrest Warrant

Description

HUNGARY: Hungary blocked European Union member states from issuing a joint statement about an international arrest warrant against Russian President Vladimir Putin, according to people familiar with the matter.

Budapest's veto meant that the EU's chief diplomat, Josep Borrell, instead released a statement in his own name "taking note" of the decision by the International Criminal Court. Bloomberg has seen the draft of what would have been the joint statement. The Hungarian Foreign Ministry called the report of a veto a "lie."

"The EU sees the decision by the ICC as a beginning of the process of accountability and holding Russian leaders to account for the crimes and atrocities they are ordering, enabling or committing in Ukraine," Borrell said in the statement published on Sunday evening.

On Monday, justice ministers from 26 EU countries issued their own statement supporting the ICC decision, which Hungary did not sign.

The ICC issued arrest warrants for Putin and his commissioner for children's rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, for alleged war crimes relating to the abduction of children from Ukraine. Officials in Kyiv are investigating more than 16,000 suspected cases of forced deportation of minors, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said last week, and so far only around 300 have been brought home.

The warrants are mostly symbolic for now, and Moscow has dismissed the move.

"It's a lie that Hungary vetoed an EU statement on the ICC case," Foreign Ministry spokesman Mate Paczolay told Bloomberg. "The truth is that Hungary told the High Representative that Hungary acknowledges the International Criminal Court's decision and doesn't want to comment on it in any way."

Hungary's government also made clear that it "wouldn't oppose any statement from either the High Representative or any member state," Paczolay said. A spokesperson for Borrell said the EU's foreign affairs service does not comment on internal working methods.

Budapest's position is likely to come up when EU leaders meet for a summit in Brussels this week.

Draft conclusions seen by Bloomberg currently state that the leaders' council "takes note of the arrest warrants recently issued by the International Criminal Court, against Russia's president and his commissioner for children's rights, for the war crime of unlawful deportation and transfer of Ukrainian children from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russia." That's similar to the wording Borrell used.

Several leaders are likely to call for stronger language, the people said. A number of EU leaders already welcomed the ICC's decision individually when it was issued last week.

— *With assistance by Zoltan Simon*

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