

Visa, Mastercard Suspend Operations in Russia

By [AFP](#)

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Visa's and Mastercard's announcements came hours after PayPal also halted its services in Russia. **Kirill Kukhmar/TASS**

Card payment giants Visa and Mastercard announced Saturday they will suspend operations in Russia, the latest major U.S. firms to join the business freeze-out of Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine.

"Noting the unprecedented nature of the current conflict and the uncertain economic environment," Mastercard said it had "decided to suspend our network services in Russia."

Visa, for its part, said that "effective immediately" it would "work with its clients and partners within Russia to cease all Visa transactions over the coming days."

U.S. President Joe Biden "welcomed the decision" during a phone call with his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy in which the two discussed U.S., ally and private industry

actions to deter Russia from aggression, according to a White House readout.

Major corporations across a range of industries have halted business in Russia since its invasion began on Feb. 24, including everything from U.S.-based tech firms such as Intel and Airbnb to French luxury giants LVMH, Hermes and Chanel.

Visa and Mastercard had already announced that they were complying with U.S. and international sanctions imposed on Russia in the wake of its attack.

"Our colleagues, our customers and our partners have been affected in ways that most of us could not imagine," Mastercard said, stating that its cards issued by Russian banks would no longer be supported by the company's network.

Visa similarly said that cards issued in Russia would no longer work outside the country.

Both companies said cards issued abroad would no longer work in Russia.

Russian banks downplay effects

"We are compelled to act following Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, and the unacceptable events that we have witnessed," Visa CEO Al Kelly said.

Russia's major banks, including its largest lender Sberbank and the Russia Central Bank, downplayed the effects that the cards' suspensions would have on their clients.

"All Visa and Mastercard bank cards issued by Russian banks will continue to operate normally on Russian territory until their expiration date," the Russian Central Bank said.

Sberbank said in a statement on its official Telegram account that the cards "can be used for operations in the Russian territory — to withdraw cash, make transfers using the card number, and for payment at offline as well as at online Russian stores."

The cards would continue to work on Russian territory, it said, because all payments in Russia are made through a national system and do not depend on foreign systems.

However, the Central Bank warned that Russians traveling abroad should carry alternate means of payment.

Mastercard added that it would continue to provide pay and benefits to its nearly 200 employees in Russia.

Visa's and Mastercard's announcements came hours after PayPal also halted its services in Russia.

Ukrainian deputy prime minister Mykhailo Fedorov tweeted a letter early Saturday from PayPal CEO Dan Schulman officially announcing the stop.

"Under the current circumstances, we are suspending PayPal services in Russia," Schulman said in the letter.

He added that PayPal would continue to support its staff in the region and would focus on

"enabling our customers and our global employee community to support" humanitarian efforts in Ukraine.

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