

# Russia's Annexation Votes Shelved Amid Ukraine Counteroffensive – Reports

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A banner reads "Together with Russia" in the editorial office of Zaporozhsky Vestnik weekly to promote a referendum on the region's accession to Russia. **Sergei Malgavko/TASS**

The Kremlin has put on hold referendums to annex territories claimed by Russian forces in Ukraine amid Kyiv's shock counteroffensive in the northeast, the independent Meduza news website [reported](#) Sunday, citing unnamed sources close to the Kremlin.

Kremlin-linked political strategists preparing the annexation votes had been reportedly called back to Russia from southern Ukraine's partially occupied Zaporizhzhia region and Kharkiv in the northeast, where Ukrainian forces have been successfully reclaiming territory for the past week.

"Everyone got the f\*ck out of there. They received orders to go home," Meduza quoted an unnamed source as saying.

Referendum strategists remain in occupied Kherson region, an agricultural hub in Ukraine's south that Russian troops had captured in March, according to Meduza.

President Vladimir Putin's ruling United Russia party last week [proposed](#) holding the anticipated annexation votes on Nov. 4, Russia's Day of National Unity.

Russian-installed authorities in Ukraine's occupied territories had been scheduled to announce the referendums as soon as next week before the plans were put on hold, Meduza reported, citing one of its sources.

"Nobody talks of November anymore," they said.

In eastern Ukraine's breakaway pro-Russian Donetsk and Luhansk regions, Russian media [reported](#) the Kremlin was planning to hold annexation referendums as fast as possible.

Putin launched the invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, days after recognizing the separatist Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) and the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) as independent states.

Ukraine's ally the United States has for weeks warned of Russian referendum plans, dismissing the expected votes as a "sham."

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