



People line up to offer flowers outside the Wang Fuk Court in the aftermath of the deadly November 26 fire in Hong Kong's Tai Po district yesterday. An outpouring of grief swept Hong Kong yesterday as thousands paid their respects and laid flowers for the 128 people killed in one of the city's deadliest fires, marking the start of an official, three-day mourning period.

PHOTO: AFP

Russia bans HRW

AGENCIES

Russian authorities have outlawed Human Rights Watch as an "undesirable organisation", a label that, under a 2015 law, makes involvement with it a criminal offence.

Friday's designation means the international human rights group must stop all work in Russia, and opens those who cooperate with or support the organisation to prosecution.

HRW has repeatedly accused Russia of suppressing dissenters and committing war crimes during its ongoing war against Ukraine.

"For over three decades, Human Rights Watch's work on post-Soviet Russia has pressed the government to uphold human rights and freedoms," the executive director at Human Rights Watch, Philippe Bolopion, said in a statement.

"Our work hasn't changed, but what's changed, dramatically, is the government's full-throttled embrace of dictatorial policies, its staggering rise in repression, and the scope of the war crimes its forces are committing in Ukraine."

The decision by the Russian prosecutor general's office is the latest move in a crackdown on Kremlin critics, journalists and activists, which has intensified since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Separately, Russia's Supreme Court designated on Thursday the Anti-Corruption Foundation set up by the late opposition activist Alexey Navalny as a "terrorist" group.

Russia's list of "undesirable organisations" currently covers more than 275 entities, including prominent independent news outlets and rights groups.

Ukraine team heads to US for peace talks

Attack on Ukraine kills 3, wounds dozens

AGENCIES

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy yesterday said that a delegation headed by security council secretary Rustem Umerov was on its way to the United States to continue talks on an agreement to end Russia's war.

Umerov has been put in charge of the Ukrainian delegation after the previous lead negotiator, Zelenskiy's powerful chief of staff Andriy Yermak, resigned on Friday hours after anti-corruption detectives searched his apartment.

Zelenskiy said he expected that the results of previous meetings with the US in Geneva, which took place last weekend, would now be "hammered out" today. Those meetings allowed Ukraine to present a counter-offer to proposals laid out by US Secretary of the Army Dan Driscoll to leaders in Kyiv almost two weeks ago.

Ukraine is facing significant pressure from Washington to agree to the terms of a peace deal while Zelenskiy finds himself in the most difficult political and military situation since the early days of Russia's invasion in 2022.

Meanwhile, a vast Russian overnight

attack on Ukraine killed three people and wounded nearly 30, officials said yesterday, with more than 600,000 households left without power after strikes on the grid.

Zelenskiy said Russia had launched around 36 missiles and nearly 600 drones in the attack.

Kyiv's lead negotiator resigns

Ukraine hit two 'shadow fleet' tankers in Black Sea

Ukraine's energy ministry said the overnight attack had hit power facilities in Kyiv and five other Ukrainian regions. More than 500,000 of the households which lost power were in the capital.

Meanwhile, Ukraine hit two tankers used by Russia to export oil while skirting Western sanctions with marine drones in the Black Sea. The joint operation to hit the so-called 'shadow fleet' vessels was run by the SBU and Ukraine's navy, an official said on condition of anonymity.

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