

Putin expected to proclaim annexation of Ukraine territory within days

Ukraine's Zelensky says Russian vote was a farce • Tribune erected on Red Square proclaiming provinces are Russia

Moscow was poised on Wednesday to annex a swath of Ukraine, releasing what it called vote tallies showing support in four partially occupied provinces to join Russia, after what Kyiv and the West denounced as illegal sham referenda held at gunpoint.

On Moscow's Red Square, a tribune with giant video screens has been set up, with billboards proclaiming "Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson - Russia!"

President Vladimir Putin could proclaim the annexation in a speech within days, just over a week since he endorsed the referenda, ordered a military mobilization at home and threatened to defend Russia with nuclear weapons if necessary.

The Russian-installed administrations of the four Ukrainian provinces on Wednesday formally asked Putin to incorporate them into Russia, which Russian officials have suggested is a formality.

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