

South Africa to host Brics summit despite Putin arrest warrant

South Africa said on Thursday, 29 June, it will host the Brics bloc summit in August as planned, amid speculation that it may move to China so Russia's President Vladimir Putin can attend in a nation not obliged to arrest him on war-crimes accusations.



Source: Reuters. Russian President Vladimir Putin visits Naryn-Kala fortress in Derbent in the southern region of Dagestan, Russia, 28 June 2023.

South Africa has a duty as a signatory to the International Criminal Court (ICC) to arrest Putin if he attends the talks between the leaders of Brazil, Russia, India and China, due to an arrest warrant over the deportation of children from Ukraine.

Putin denies the charges.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa met with him on 17 June in Russia, historically a strong ally of the governing African National Congress (ANC) since it was a liberation movement fighting white minority rule decades ago.

"South Africa will host the 15th Brics Summit at the Sandton Convention Centre in Sandton, Johannesburg, from 22 to 24 August 2023," the Department of International Relations said in a statement.

Presidency spokesperson Vincent Magwenya confirmed in a text message that this meant the whole summit, including the main part involving the Brics heads of state, would take place in South Africa.

He and a spokesperson for the international relations department declined to comment on whether or not Putin will attend.

Contemplating venue change

South African officials had at the end of last month said the Brics countries were considering moving the summit to China, which is not a member of the international court. They could still decide to change the venue at the last minute.



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Katja Hamilton 27 Jun 2023



On Tuesday, 27 June, South Africa's minister of international relations Naledi Pandor said Putin had not yet replied to an invitation, sent before the ICC charged him on 18 March.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva are all planning to attend, Pandor said.

South Africa says it is neutral in the Ukraine conflict, but has been criticised by Western powers for being friendly to Russia, including hosting foreign minister Sergey Lavrov and conducting joint naval exercises.

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