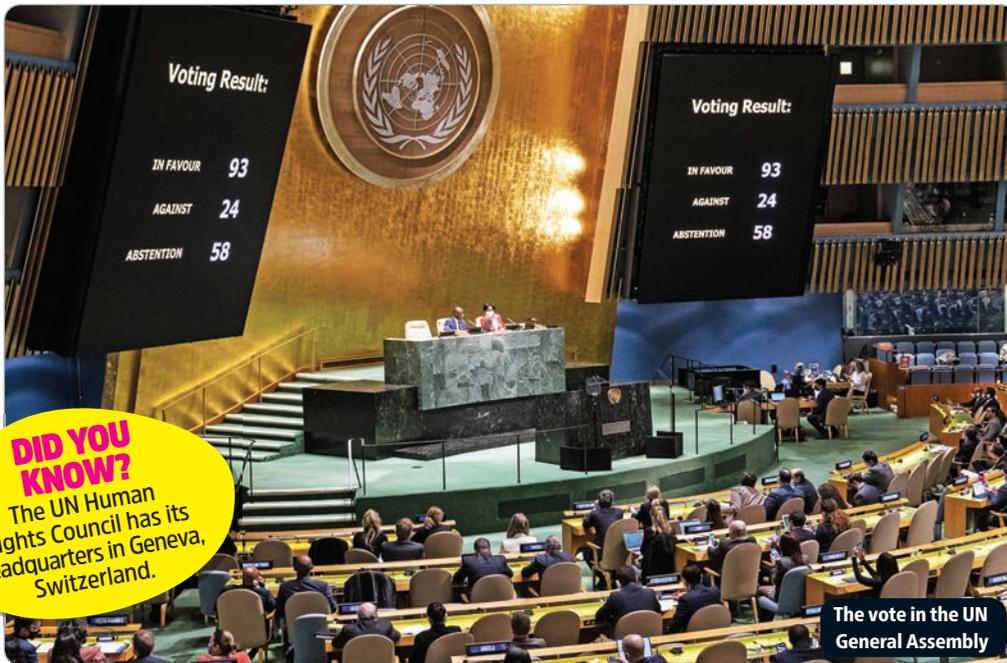




This week's big news



DID YOU KNOW?
The UN Human Rights Council has its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

The vote in the UN General Assembly

Russian runners banned



The 2021 marathon

Boston Marathon organizers have banned athletes who live in Russia or Belarus (a nation allied with Russia) from the race on April 18. Russian and Belarusian athletes who live outside their countries can run but not under their nations' flags. The decision is part of a global movement to punish Russia for the war in Ukraine.

UN removes Russia from council

On April 7, the United Nations (UN) voted to suspend Russia from its Human Rights Council (UNHRC). The rare move against a founding member of the UN (an organization of 193 nations working for peace and cooperation) came amid accusations that Russia had committed war crimes during its attacks on Ukraine.

What is the UN Human Rights Council?

The UNHRC is a group of 47 nations that protects and promotes human rights and investigates violations. Human rights are the basic set of rights that belong to everyone, including the right to work, education, health and well-being, safety, and freedom of opinion, among others. The member nations are elected to a three-year term by the UN's General Assembly (the group's main body). Only one other country has been suspended from the UNHRC. In 2011, Libya was temporarily removed after government forces attacked civilian (non-military) protesters.

What happened?

The suspension came after Russian forces were accused of killing civilians and bombing civilian targets, including hospitals and schools,

in Ukraine. The vote in the General Assembly required approval of at least two thirds of the nations present, and 93 out of 193 voted in favor. Twenty-four countries, including Russia, China, Iran, and Syria, voted against the motion. India and 58 other members abstained (didn't vote), with some calling for negotiations and investigation instead. Sergiy Kyslytsya, the Ukrainian ambassador to the UN, called the removal of Russia "not an option but a duty." Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the US ambassador to the UN, said, "Russia should not have a position of authority in a body whose purpose . . . is to promote respect for human rights." Russia has denied committing war crimes and said the accusations are based on false information. After the vote, Russia resigned from the UNHRC. A UK official said that move was meaningless, comparing it to resigning from a job after being fired.



Linda Thomas-Greenfield

Why is this significant?

The vote made Russia more isolated from the rest of the world. Louis Charbonneau, a director at the nonprofit group Human Rights Watch, said it sends a "crystal-clear message" to Russian President Vladimir Putin that the world will hold Russia responsible for its actions. In the

past, Russia has used its membership on the council to protect allies such as Syria and Belarus from human rights investigations and to stand in the way of efforts to strengthen human rights. It will no longer be able to do this.

What other steps were taken?

On April 7, the European Union (EU, a group of 27 nations, mostly in Europe) announced a plan to ban Russian coal as part of its effort to punish Russia for the war. The ban will go into full effect in August. The EU has passed four rounds of sanctions (economic penalties) on Russia. In the US, Congress (the branch of government that makes laws) voted to revoke Russia's "most favored nation" trade status. This allows America to create new penalties against Russia, including tariffs (a form of government taxes).

What will happen next?

The UNHRC suspension will remain in place until it is lifted, or until 2023, when Russia's term on the council ends. Meanwhile, in Ukraine, Russian forces withdrew from some parts of the country and regrouped for an attack on eastern Ukraine. Additional evidence of war crimes was reported. The International Criminal Court is investigating the accusations, and France sent more than a dozen experts to help gather evidence.