

European Bodies Express Support for Ukraine Protesters

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BRUSSELS — NATO and European politicians have expressed their support for Ukrainian anti-government protesters, disputing a statement by President Vladimir Putin that the demonstrations in Kiev represented "not a revolution, but a pogrom."

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen on Tuesday condemned the "excessive" use of force by police against Ukrainian protesters, while several dozen European Parliament members organized a solidarity event with demonstrators in Brussels.

"Obviously we fully respect Ukrainian decisions on their alliance affiliations and to which organizations they want to belong or with which organizations they want to cooperate," Rasmussen said at the start of a meeting of foreign ministers of NATO countries.

Even though Ukraine is not on the official agenda of the NATO foreign ministers meetings, an official for the organization said the topic would likely be raised anyway, as some of the

ministers said they should "follow the situation in the country more closely."

Calling Ukraine "NATO's strategic partner," NATO spokeswoman Oana Lungescu said Monday that "strong practical cooperation between NATO and Ukraine will continue as it was before," despite the situation.

The European Parliament also expressed support for the Euro Maidan protests on Tuesday. A member of the body's Group of the European People's Party, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, who organized a solidarity action with protesters at the parliament's Brussels office, told Ukrainian media that the action was designed to show that Ukrainians "are not forgotten in Europe and European parliament, which profoundly sympathizes with them."

Saryusz-Wolski also said he had proposed a debate on Ukraine next week in Strasbourg and called on the European Parliament to pass a resolution on the situation in Ukraine. He did not elaborate on the details of the resolution but said the parliament would provide political support for Ukrainian protesters.

Ukrainian activists are also planning to organize a demonstration in front of the Ukrainian Embassy in Brussels, where an official reception dedicated to Ukraine's Armed Forces Day was to be held late Tuesday night.

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