

Ukraine Opposition Fails to Force Out Government in Vote

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Demonstrators waving flags and shouting slogans at a rally in support of EU integration in Kiev on Tuesday. **Gleb Garanich**

KIEV, Ukraine — Ukraine's opposition failed to force out the government with a parliamentary no-confidence vote Tuesday, leaving the country's political tensions unresolved with calls for more mass protests.

The opposition called for the vote in protest both at President Viktor Yanukovich's shelving of a long-anticipated agreement to deepen political and economic ties with the European Union and the violent tactics used by police to disperse demonstrators protesting that decision.

The dispute has brought crowds up to 300,000 people to the streets of Kiev, the largest outpouring of public anger since the 2004 Orange Revolution.

The no-confidence measure got the support of 186 members of the Verkhovna Rada, 40 shy of the majority needed. Even if it had passed, Yanukovich would have remained president, but the prime minister and Cabinet would have been ejected.

Prime Minister Mykola Azarov, attending the parliamentary session with his Cabinet, apologized for the violence by riot police against protesters.

"Both the president and the government feel deeply sorry that it happened," Azarov told a rowdy parliament, to never-ceasing chants of "Shame" and "Resignation" from opposition lawmakers.

But Azarov defended the government's course, denounced protesters who have blocked access to government offices and warned the opposition that authorities would be able to hold their ground.

"We are open for dialogue," Azarov said. "We have extended our hand to you, but if we encounter a fist, I will be frank, we have enough force."

In turn, Vitali Klitschko, the world boxing champion and leader of the opposition party Udar, vowed that the action would continue.

"We will peacefully blockade the government building and not allow them to work," he told demonstrators on Independence Square after the no-confidence motion failed.

During the vote, several thousand protesters rallied outside the parliament building, which was cordoned off by white police buses and riot police in full gear.

After the vote failed, the opposition urged Ukrainians to continue protests and called on demonstrators in Kiev to march toward Yanukovich's office and demand that he sign a decree dismissing Azarov's Cabinet and call an early election.

"If he thinks he is going to evade responsibility, he is wrong," opposition leader Arseniy Yatsenyuk said.

Azarov, like Yanukovich, has said Ukraine wants further integration with the EU, but cannot bear the burden of the trade losses with Russia it would presumably suffer. Ukraine is also deeply dependent on natural gas from Russia, which previously has sharply raised prices for its neighbor.

Russia opposes closer Ukraine-EU relations, hoping to draw Ukraine into a trading bloc of several former Soviet republics.

Yanukovich left the country for a trip to China, where he is expected to sign an array of economic cooperation agreements.

Lawmakers in Poland, a country at the forefront of EU attempts to bring Ukraine into the 28-nation bloc's fold, adopted a resolution calling for dialogue between Ukraine's opposition and the government. It also condemned the use of force during protests and expressed "solidarity" with pro-European Ukrainians.

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