

Medvedev Says Russia Did Not Pressure Ukraine Into Stopping EU Deal

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Ukraine decided independently to abandon a long-anticipated trade deal with the European Union, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said Friday, denying that Moscow pressured its neighbor into changing direction.

"They realized that at the moment, they're not ready for this," he said in a televised interview on state TV channel Rossiya 1. "In all probability, they decided at least to postpone the signing. We [Russia] just focused on the problems [of the deal], telling them [Ukraine] what they might be."

Massive anti-government protests began in Kiev last month after Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich backed down from signing the long-expected landmark deals with the EU and pledged instead to focus on strengthening ties with Moscow. The move came just after he had flown to Russia for a secret meeting with President Vladimir Putin.

Medvedev said Ukraine alone should decide its next moves, and spoke out against the involvement of foreigners, including Russians, in what he called the country's internal affairs.

In the run-up toward the proposed signing of the EU agreement, Russia warned Ukraine about the consequences of the deal for its relations with Moscow, imposed trade sanctions on some Ukrainian goods and repeated earlier demands for it to pay its massive gas bills.

The prime minister expressed a sense of kinship with Ukraine, however, saying Russia is paying attention to its southern neighbor's situation.

"We are not indifferent to what is happening there," Medvedev said. "It's a country that's very close to us, people living there are very close to us, and in addition, Ukraine is for us a very important trade and economic partner, like we are for [them]."

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