

Malta Newspaper Publishes Open Letter Thanking Yanukovych for Canceling Visit

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Valetta, the capital of Malta. **Briangotts**

While European dignitaries are expressing support for the anti-government Kiev protesters and the President Viktor Yanukovych himself heads to Moscow for economic talks, some European residents are glad that the embattled leader scrapped plans to come their way.

A Maltese newspaper published an open letter to Yanukovych on Saturday, saying "thank you" for canceling his visit to Malta scheduled for last week and adding that the island country wouldn't welcome a leader who had cracked down on protests in his country.

"Mr. President, the people of Malta did not want you among us," Austin Sammut, a lawyer, said in a commentary, titled "Thank you, Mr. President" and published in The Times of Malta.

Yanukovych was scheduled to visit Malta last Monday, but then canceled the trip saying that he needed to "focus on domestic political issues."

Since the Ukrainian government made an about turn and abandoning a plan to sign an Association Agreement with the EU in late November, protesters have held mass demonstrations in Kiev calling for European integration that ballooned in size after violence against participants

Sammut also lauded his government's refusal to confer a medal to Yanukovich, which is traditionally presented to visiting state leaders.

While the country will not welcome the Ukrainian leader, Eastern Europeans could become more frequent visitors to Malta, and the European Union in general, by purchasing Maltese citizenship under a bill passed by Malta's parliament in November.

The measure, aimed at filling the country's coffers, allows foreigners to acquire Maltese citizenship for 650,000 euros (\$894,000), and provides the buyer with all the perks of a European Union passport, including the right to live and work in any EU country.

"I am sure he can afford 650,000 euros," Sammut said. "And what's more, he need not set a foot on the island."

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