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Ukraine Says Protesters Have Caused $350,000 in Damage

By The Moscow Times

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The Ukrainian authorities have urged anti-government protesters to move out of the capital's City Hall, where they set up camp after seizing the building early this month, saying the makeshift encampment has caused more than $350,000 in damage.

Kiev administration deputy chief Anatoly Holubchenko offered protesters to help find them another building to set up their mattresses and cots where they can set up camp during the freezing nights, Interfax reported Wednesday.

The Kiev authorities estimate the damage caused to the building at around 3 million hryvnias ($370,000) and plan to bill the protesters for those losses, he told reporters Tuesday.

"There are commandants, the names and signatures of those who signed, who notified us about the action, and that's who we are going to bill," Holubchenko told reporters on Tuesday.

President Viktor Yanukovych signed an amnesty on Tuesday for all those arrested since mass protests broke out after his government's decision to pull out of a planned European association deal last month in favor of closer ties with Russia. Since then, the protests have grown into demands for Yanukovych's resignation and new elections for president and parliament.

Russia, which had put heavy economic pressure on Ukraine to persuade it to abolish the European Union deal, heeded appeals by Yanukovych's beleaguered government for financial help last week, and approved a $15-billion loan and a 30-percent cut in the prices for Russian natural gas supplies.

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