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Russia Steps Up Pressure on Ukraine to Disarm Far-Right Groups

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Russia increased pressure on Ukraine on Wednesday to disarm paramilitary groups, urging it to go beyond "sham" promises to crack down on the far-right and protect Russian speakers.

Moscow also expressed concern that the Ukrainian government was not holding a public debate on plans to reform the constitution, making clear that it fears the interests of the Russian-speaking community will not be taken into account.

Ukraine's parliament on Tuesday ordered security forces to disarm illegal armed groups and police shut down the Kiev base of a far-right nationalist group, Right Sector, after a shooting incident in which three people were wounded.

"The fact that gunmen from the Right Sector have, so to say, vacated their headquarters in central Kiev has received a lot of comment in Kiev over the recent days," a Russian Foreign Ministry statement said.

It urged the Ukrainian authorities "not to confine themselves to 'sham' statements to fight

radical forces in Ukraine but to take resolute measures to disarm gunmen."

Relations between Moscow and Kiev have been in crisis since the Ukrainian parliament deposed Moscow-backed President Viktor Yanukovych on Feb. 22 and Russia seized control of the Crimea region from Ukraine before annexing it on March 21.

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