

# Community Leaders Tell Russia That Czechs, Germans Face No Threat In Ukraine

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Leaders of Czech and German communities in Ukraine have joined activists from other ethnic minorities in saying that they see no threat from Ukrainian authorities and need no protection, a news report has said.

Volodymyr Leisle, leader of the Council of Germans of Ukraine, and Lyudmyla Mukhina, the head of the Czech National Council of Ukraine, denied Wednesday a recent statement by the Russian Foreign Ministry that their communities were facing threats, Ukrinform reported.

"We can responsibly say that Ukraine is safe for Ukrainian Germans and, to date, we have felt no pressure from the new authorities," Leisle said.

Ukrainian Czechs "support the unity of the country" of which they are citizens, Mukhina added.

A statement released March 28 by the Russian Foreign Ministry singled out Ukraine's ethnic Germans, Czechs and Hungarians, saying that a situation was "developing dramatically around" their communities.

"They are concerned about the instability of the political situation in the country and are seriously fearing for their lives," the Foreign Ministry said.

Ukraine's TSN reported that ethnic Germans did have some concerns, but that the perceived threat was coming from Russian forces, not the Ukrainian authorities.

An ethnic German serviceman in the Ukrainian army, David Vagner, was beaten by Russian troops in Crimea last week, TSN reported.

After Russian President Vladimir Putin told a news conference in early March that his government needed to "protect" Russian speakers from Ukrainian "nationalists and anti-Semites," a Ukrainian Jewish organization responded with an open letter saying that members of their communities needed no protection and added that Putin "must have mistaken Ukraine for Russia."

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