

Ukrainian Bill to Help Russian Crimea Protesters Attain Citizenship

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Ukraine's parliament will make it easier for Russians to acquire Ukrainian citizenship if they emigrate in protest at Moscow's annexation of Crimea. (Vedomosti)

A bill has been submitted to Ukraine's parliament to make it easier for Russians to acquire Ukrainian citizenship if they emigrate in protest at Moscow's annexation of Crimea.

The bill of amendments to Ukraine's law on citizenship — submitted by lawmakers from the Fatherland and Udar parties — would exempt Russian protest emigrants from the requirements of a prior period of residence in Ukraine and fluency in the Ukrainian language, said an explanatory note accompanying the bill published on the parliament's website.

Immigrants from Russia would be obliged, however, to master the Ukrainian language at a level "sufficient for understanding and communication" within two years of acquiring citizenship, the note added.

Amid pro-Kremlin coverage of the Ukrainian crisis by Russia's television channels, polls show that the majority of Russians support the annexation of Crimea, while the number of Russians

who have a positive view of Ukraine shrank from 63 percent in early March to 52 percent at the end of the month.

But some Russians have said that the move has stoked their wish to emigrate — including to Ukraine.

Last month, a Russian woman applied for political asylum in Ukraine at a border checkpoint, saying that she feared political persecution at her home in Moscow, Ukraine's border service said, UNIAN reported.

Even before the Crimea crisis, Russia saw a surge in the number of people seeking to leave the country. A United Nations report last month said that some 40,000 Russians applied for asylum in countries around the world last year, a 76 percent increase from the year before.

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