

'No Complaints' From Russian-Speakers in Crimea

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Pro-Russian demonstrators hold a huge Russian national flag as they take part in a rally in the Black Sea port of Odessa, Ukraine.

Ukraine's human rights office has not received a single complaint of rights violations from Russian-speakers in Crimea, its head said, denouncing the Kremlin's line that interference in Ukraine was prompted by the need to protect Russian speakers.

"Neither are there any problems in the region of Kharkiv, nor in Donetsk, nor in Lugansk," Human rights ombudswoman Valeria Lutkovskaya was quoted by her office as saying, Ukraine's UNIAN reported Thursday.

Pro-Moscow protesters recently seized government buildings in the three predominantly Russian-speaking regions in eastern Ukraine to demand secession to Russia, but Ukrainian and Western officials said the demonstrators were not local, and were possibly paid or covertly dispatched by Russia.

After Russia dispatched troops to Crimea, Ukraine's Russian speakers appealed to President Vladimir Putin in open letters and online videos to say that their rights needed no protection from Moscow.

Leaders of Ukraine's ethnic German and Czech communities, which have been singled out by the Russian Foreign Ministry as other supposed victims of ethnically based persecution, have also said recently that their ethnic groups feel secure in Ukraine.

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