

Ukraine Accepts International Court, May Probe Kiev Deaths

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THE HAGUE, Netherlands — Ukraine has accepted the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, opening the way for a possible investigation into the violent crackdown by former President Viktor Yanukovich's government on demonstrators, the court announced.

Ukraine, which is not a member state of the court, accepted ICC jurisdiction from Nov. 21, 2013, to Feb. 22, saying attacks by Yanukovich's forces left more than 100 demonstrators dead in Kiev and other cities, according to documents released by the court Thursday.

A statement by Ukraine's parliament alleged that Ukrainian law enforcement agencies "unlawfully used physical force, special means and weapons toward the participants of peaceful actions" in Kiev and elsewhere "on the orders of senior officials of the state."

The statement said the attacks killed more than 100 people and injured more than 2,000. It also alleges that Yanukovich's government abducted, tortured and even killed some dissenters.

Yanukovych fled from Ukraine to Russia in February after months of protests by demonstrators angry at his decision to align his country more closely with Russia than Europe.

The court stressed that its prosecutors will now decide whether to open an investigation. If that happens, it said the ICC prosecutor will decide on the basis of the evidence whether to ask the ICC judges to issue arrest warrants or summonses to appear for people charged with committing crimes.

"The declaration is an important move to ensure that grave violations of human rights will not be forgotten and impunity will not be accorded to those who commit them," said Roman Romanov, of the International Renaissance Foundation in Ukraine. "The next step for Ukraine to take is to ensure its full engagement with the ICC as a cornerstone of the international justice system."

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