

Germany Widens Travel Warning, Says Ukraine Close to War

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel chats with Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier in the Bundestag, the lower house of parliament in Berlin.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said Ukraine is close to war as his country's foreign ministry warned Germans against traveling to eastern and southern Ukraine and Crimea.

"The bloody pictures from Odessa have shown us that we are just a few steps away from a military confrontation," Steinmeier told major newspapers El Pais, Le Monde, La Repubblica and Gazeta Wyborcza. He added that the conflict had taken on an intensity "that a short time ago we would not have considered possible".

Steinmeier's ministry also warned Germans on Tuesday against travelling to Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in March, and reiterated an earlier advisory to avoid eastern areas.

"It is urgently advised to avoid traveling to Crimea," the Foreign Ministry wrote on its website. "In the German government's view, Crimea belongs to Ukraine but in actuality it is controlled by Russia. Due to the current situation German citizens can no longer be guaranteed consular services."

The ministry added that it discouraged any visits to eastern and southern Ukraine. It also urged German citizens to leave those regions and said journalists were particularly endangered.

Dozens of people died in the Ukrainian city of Odessa last week when pro-Russian militants clashed with their opponents, and Kiev forces are fighting separatists who have seized control of towns in the east of the country.

"The situation in the east and south of Ukraine is extremely tense at the moment," it said. "There are an increased number of armed occupations of state buildings there have been incidents of foreigners being held."

In a television interview late on Monday, Steinmeier said he feared that neither Russia nor Ukraine could now control forces unleashed as fighting intensified around the pro-Russian stronghold of Slovyansk.

"I'm convinced we are struggling against a situation that has taken on a dynamic of its own. There are groups in eastern Ukraine that are not listening to either Kiev ... or Moscow."

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