

Ministers Boycott U.K.-Russia Year of Culture Over Ukraine Crisis

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In a show of frustration over the ongoing Ukraine conflict, ministers from the U.K. reportedly announced the decision to boycott all events set to be held as part of the U.K.-Russia "Year of Culture."

The "Year of Culture," which features artistic, sporting, and scientific events, is meant to strengthen ties between the nations, but the recent downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 and ongoing fighting in eastern Ukraine have aggravated international tensions.

More than 500 cultural programs and events are set to take place during the course of the year in both Russia and the U.K. Although most of the scheduled events will continue as planned, they will not be attended by U.K. ministers.

"In light of the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia, Her Majesty's Government has withdrawn all ministerial and senior official involvement in the 'Year of Culture,'" a spokesperson for the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office said in comments carried by The Herald Scotland on Sunday.

A spokesperson for the Scottish government echoed this sentiment, saying it was "no longer actively supporting the U.K.-Russia Year of Culture," according to the newspaper.

The program for the 2014 Year of Culture was approved last year by then-British Foreign Secretary William Hague and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

Although several of the program's events have already successfully taken place, at least one of the most hotly anticipated exhibitions — the "Young British Artists" exhibit in Moscow — was cancelled over the crisis in Ukraine. In early June, the British Council announced that the event's organizers had lost funding as a result of the diplomatic fallout over Russia's annexation of Crimea in March.

British ministers are not the only ones to use the Year of Culture as a means to voice their dissatisfaction with what they see as Russia's involvement in the Ukraine conflict. Last week, the Polish government cancelled the 2015 Polish-Russian Year of Culture.

See also:

[Poland Cancels Year of Bilateral Celebration With Russia Over Ukraine](#)

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