The Moscow Times
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Crimea's Prime Minister Claims Nobody Misses McDonald's

By The Moscow Times

August 21, 2014



People are reflected in a window of a closed McDonald's branch in Moscow, one of several temporarily closed by Russia's food safety watchdog.

As McDonald's is hounded by sanitary inspectors demanding restaurant closures on the Russian mainland, citizens devastated by the prospect of a homeland shorn of Golden Arches, Big Macs, and McFlurries might want to adopt some Crimean stoicism.

Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in March, has been a McDonald's-free zone for four months, but no one is experiencing withdrawal symptoms or bellyaching about the loss, according to the peninsula's leadership.

"No one is unhappy [that McDonald's has gone]. There hasn't been a single complaint from tourists or Crimeans," ITAR-Tass quoted acting Crimean Prime Minister Sergei Aksyonov as saying Thursday.

"We will be healthier, everything's fine. McDonald's — it isn't our [Russian] food. Look at the people who eat in McDonald's, a lot of them can only walk through doorways by turning sideways," he continued.

Russia's consumer rights watchdog on Wednesday shut four McDonald's restaurants in Moscow citing breaches of sanitary rules, and on Thursday started unscheduled inspections of the chain in a number of Russian regions, raising the specter of further closures.

McDonald's shut its three restaurants in Crimea at the start of April "due to manufacturing reasons independent of McDonald's." The U.S. fast food chain provided no further details on the reasons for the closures, which came soon after the annexation.

Relations between Russia and U.S. have continued on a downward spiral since Moscow's addition of Crimea, with both sides imposing sanctions on each other against the backdrop of the increasingly bloody crisis in Ukraine, giving rise to suspicions that the recent targeting of McDonald's is politically motivated.

See also:

McDonald's Raided By Russia's Food Watchdog Over 'Hygiene Complaints'

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