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Poroshenko Signs Law Granting Limited Self Rule in Eastern Ukraine

By The Moscow Times

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Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko delivers a speech as he visits the Khortytsia Island near the Dnieper River to meet with servicemen, who take part in the military conflict in eastern regions of the country, while marking the Day of Ukraine's Defenders in Zaporizhzhia region, Oct. 14, 2014.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has signed a law granting three-year limited self-rule status to certain territories in the separatist-minded Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

According to a statement posted Thursday on the presidential website, the law was signed to create the "conditions for the prompt normalization of the situation, restoration of legal order, constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens."

Ukrainian legislation will still be applicable in these territories "with consideration of peculiarities," the statement said. People's militias will be created to maintain order on the ground, while local government bodies will govern these territories after local elections scheduled for Dec. 7, the statement added.

After the ouster of former President Viktor Yanukovych in March, rebels in the east of Ukraine refused to acknowledge Kiev's pro-Western government and established self-proclaimed republics in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

In accordance with the law signed Thursday, insurgents who participated in the eastern conflict against Ukrainian army forces will be immune to criminal prosecution.

Alexander Zakharchenko, the prime minister of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, told state-run news agency RIA Novosti on Friday that its government would not recognize the new law, as it was signed by a foreign state.

"Kiev is still under illusion that it governs us, but in reality this is not the case," he said.

In addition, Zakharchenko said Donetsk's insurgents, who lost ground following a Ukrainian army offensive in July, were planning to return to the rest of the Donetsk region, which is "currently occupied" by Ukraine.

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