

Russia Says It Wants East Ukraine to Stay With Kiev Under Reformed Constitution

By [The Moscow Times](#)

December 15, 2014



Russia's Foreign Minister Lavrov during bilateral talks with Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir at the Presidential Palace in Khartoum, Dec. 3, 2014.

Moscow wants Ukraine to carry out a constitutional reform to allow more autonomy to Russian-speaking eastern regions that would then stay with Kiev, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in comments published on Monday.

In an interview with the Interfax news agency, Lavrov said Ukraine needed a constitutional reform "with the participation of all regions and all political powers" that would allow the two rebellious eastern regions to remain part of the country.

Lavrov put the blame on Kiev for what he said was forcing the eastern regions out of Ukraine by refusing to give them more autonomy to seek ways out of the conflict that has killed more

than 4,700 people since the violence started mid-April.

"I very much hope that the steps that the Ukrainian leadership is taking, provoking the tearing-away of Donbass, will end," he said in referring to the two eastern Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk.

"... that Kiev's policy will change toward establishing dialogue with Donbass in order to work out the agreements that will allow all Ukrainians from all the regions to live in Ukraine with equality and respect."

Russia has in the past weeks called for a new round of peace talks on the conflict, which pits government troops against pro-Russian rebels fighting to split from Kiev.

In September, Kiev, Moscow, pro-Russian separatists and the OSCE European watchdog agreed on a cease-fire in east Ukraine.

But it has been repeatedly violated and the West accuses Russia of supporting the rebels with arms and troops to destabilize Ukraine and stall its drive toward closer ties with the European Union.

The West slapped sanctions on Russia over the conflict. Russia sides with the rebels but says it is not involved in the armed conflict. It blames the West for playing a role in the toppling of Ukraine's former Moscow-allied President Viktor Yanukovich in February.

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