

# EU's Top Diplomat Says Destabilized Russia Not in Anyone's Interest

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European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini leaves a family photo next to (back L-R) Greece's Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and France's President Francois Hollande during an European Union leaders summit in Brussels.

A destabilized and isolated Russia is in nobody's interests, and sanctions are only being kept in place because a truce agreement in the conflict in Ukraine is not being fully implemented, the European Union's foreign policy chief said on Wednesday.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused "someone in the European Union" on Tuesday of trying to ensure a ceasefire in eastern Ukraine does not hold.

Pro-Russian separatists and the Ukrainian government agreed the truce in the Belarussian capital Minsk on Feb. 12, but it has failed to end all fighting and the Lithuanian president told Reuters it was now all but dead.

Speaking to students during a visit to Beijing, the EU's top diplomat Federica Mogherini said

that while she did not see Russia as an "actor" of instability or insecurity, violations of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty were a matter of universal concern.

"Like China, our European priority is for the violence to stop in the east of Ukraine. Our efforts, as Europeans, are all focused on the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, and we are concretely contributing to that," she said at the elite Peking University.

"At the same time, the European Union has developed a policy of sanctions towards Russia, but I could not stress enough in all my speeches that a sanctions policy is not in itself a policy — it's an instrument, a tool. And as such we are keeping that as long as the Minsk agreement is not fully implemented."

Kiev and the West accuse Moscow of sending arms and troops to help the separatists in fighting which has killed more than 6,100 people in just over a year.

Russia denies the accusations and says the West instigated the overthrow of a Moscow-backed Ukrainian president last year as part of efforts to reduce Russian influence in the region.

Mogherini said that in many other areas, such as talks on Iran's controversial nuclear program, Russia was often a constructive partner.

"A destabilized and isolated Russia is not in the interest of the European Union, is not for sure in the interest of the Russian people, and I believe it's not in the interest of the Russian leadership, but it is for them to decide," she added.

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