

# Russian Sanctions to Remain Until Crimea Returned to Ukraine – U.S.

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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People watch fireworks during celebrations on the main square of the Crimean city of Simferopol.

Sanctions against Russia will remain in place until Crimea is returned to Ukraine, U.S. State Department spokesman John Kirby said in a press statement Tuesday.

The announcement came on the eve of the second anniversary of the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula.

“We will not accept the redrawing of borders by force in the 21st century. Sanctions related to Crimea will remain in place as long as the occupation continues. We again call on Russia to end that occupation and return Crimea to Ukraine,” Kirby said.

Moscow has repeatedly claimed that the people of Crimea democratically and in full accordance with international law voted for annexation. Russia-appointed Crimean Prime Minister Sergei Aksyonov said that the referendum — held on March 16, 2014 — would have

the same outcome “one hundred times,” the state-run TASS news agency reported Wednesday.

“I am sure that all Crimeans, if need be, would vote that way another 100 times. Fortunately we don’t have to because the referendum was legal. Once and for all Crimea has been returned and there is no way back,” Aksyonov said, TASS reported.

The United States does not recognize the referendum, and “remains deeply concerned by the situation in Russian-occupied Crimea, where occupation 'authorities' suppress dissent and where ethnic and religious minorities — especially Crimean Tatars and ethnic Ukrainians — face serious and ongoing repression,” Kirby said.

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