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Russians Cautious Over Thaw In Relations With Turkey

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A poll by the state-run Public Opinion Foundation has shown that 60 percent of Russians believe that the Russian government should not rush to normalize relations with Turkey, the Kommersant newspaper reported Friday.

Relations between the two countries were only normalized and package tourism to Turkey reopened last month following an apology from Turkish President Recep Erdogan to Russian President Vladimir Putin for the downing of a Russian warplane over the Syrian-Turkish border in November.

The incident, which Russia described as “a stab in the back from the accomplices of terrorists," led to a raft of economic sanctions and a ban on tour packages and charter flights to Turkey.

The poll showed Russians divided over the lifting of sanctions against Turkey after 42 percent of respondents agreed with the decision while 39 percent said they believed it was a mistake.

Just 28 percent of respondents believed both countries wanted relations to improve.

Political analyst Maria Lipman said that public sentiment could not change as quickly as the political landscape, calling the improvement in relations “too sudden.”

“There has been a strong emphasis in the media on seeing 'enemies of Russia' everywhere for a long time," she said.

“For public opinion to change, citizens will have to hear over a long period that we now have good relations with Turkey.”

The poll was carried out from July 9-10 among 1,500 people in 53 Russian regions.

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