

'We're the Ones Who Should Be Offended,' Says Putin

Russian president in defiant mood following turbulent week in international relations.

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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At the end of the most strained week in Russian-Western relations for decades, President Vladimir Putin addressed his critics in defiant mood. Speaking at the “VTB Russia Calling!”

Conference in Moscow, Wednesday, he claimed the West had unilaterally withdrawn from the negotiating table.

“There is no dialogue now, only some kind of dictate,” he told the audience.

Russia finds itself increasingly isolated internationally. The United States is considering imposing additional sanctions on Russia for its role in supporting Syrian President Bashar Assad's continued assault on the opposition holdout of Aleppo, and for its alleged role in hacking the servers of the American Democratic Party.

Putin acknowledged — for the first time — that Western sanctions were “affecting” the Russian economy, but that would not change his course in international affairs.

His comments came just days after Russia’s controversial veto of a French UN resolution to end airstrikes in Aleppo.

Putin used the forum to defend the Kremlin’s position on Syria. “Our partners should not be offended by our veto,” he said. “We are the ones who should be offended.”

He claimed that the French had “failed to take Russia's interests in Syria into account,” and had failed to place any blame on the Syrian opposition for the war there. Russia was, he said, “ready” to support an initiative pushed by UN Special Envoy for Syria Steffan De Mistura to withdraw rebels from Aleppo.

The Russian president alleged the initiative had been scuppered by the West.

“We were expecting for a joint constructive effort with France and other UN security council members,” he said. “What happened next? The French foreign minister flew from Moscow to Washington the next day, and met with Secretary of State John Kerry, and accused Russia of all mortal sins. No one even bothered to talk to us, they just brought this resolution to the Security Council, obviously expecting us to veto it”.

Putin claimed the other security council members had conspired to “stir up anti-Russian hysteria in the controlled media.”

Russia's relations with France, once the most reliable in Europe, have taken a severe hit. Yesterday, the Kremlin cancelled a state visit to Paris, scheduled for October 19. Preparations for the trip had been a year in the making, but the French president pulled away from the engagement following Russia’s bombing of Aleppo, prompting Moscow to cancel the entire visit.

Putin downplayed the idea that this was evidence of a major breakdown in French–Russian relations.

"The visit wasn't even cancelled," he insisted. "It was just that the French side said the visit was focused on the official opening of cultural center, and that wasn't the best time to talk about such humanitarian topics.”

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