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Chess Star Karyakin Defends Support for Russian Crimea

By The Moscow Times

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Richard Drew / AP

Russian chess grandmaster Sergei Karyakin has defended his outspoken support for Russia's annexation of Crimea.

“I have my opinion, and I have the right to express it,” Karyakin said in an exclusive interview with The Moscow Times. “If that offends anyone, there's nothing I can do. It’s my opinion and not a bargaining chip.”

Karyakin, who was born in the Crimean city of Simferopol, has been a vocal supporter of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The 26-year-old grandmaster represented Ukraine in international competitions until 2009, when he began representing Russia.

Embed:

Поздравляю подругу детства Катю Лагно с получением российского гражданства!

A photo posted by Sergey Karjakin (@sergey_karjakin) on Jul 22, 2014 at 9:51am PDT

He placed second in the 2016 World Chess Championship last week, eventually losing a dramatic tiebreak match to Norway's Magnus Carlsen.

“Of course, I was really upset that I lost, but the match was relentless, so there's nothing for me to be ashamed of,” Karyakin told The Moscow Times. “I did everything I could, but I just fell slightly short.”

Karyakin, who became the world's youngest grandmaster at the age of 12, pledged to bring a

chess world champion title back to Russia in the future.

“Russia has always had a strong chess tradition,” he said, but Russia no longer dominates the field as Soviet players did.

“We have not become worse,” Karyakin said, “but our competition has just gotten stronger.”

Eva Hartog contributed to this report.

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