

U.S. Wants to Divide and Impoverish Russians — Foreign Ministry Claims

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Maria Zakharova **Valery Sharifulin / TASS**

Russia's Foreign Ministry has claimed that Western sanctions aim to divide and impoverish the Russian population instead of punishing Moscow for geopolitical decisions and suspected election meddling.

The United States targeted 24 Russian officials and oligarchs in new sanctions released last week in response to "malign" actions that include meddling in the 2016 presidential election.

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"It's a strategy, a game called 'Strong-arm Russia'," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova [said](#) on the state-run Russia-1 television channel on Sunday.

Noting that Russia has been under sanctions "approximately from 2011-2012," Zakharova

argued that anti-Russian measures were not meant as punishment for either U.S. election meddling claims or Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.

"They need [our] society to remain divided, for there to be constant internal battles, for there to be impoverishment as well, the more the better," she said.

"Only then do they want to be friends with us. Only then are we welcome and liked by all," she added.

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