

# Russia Should Annex Donbass, Communist Party Leader Says

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Gennady Zyuganov (Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency)

Russia's Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov has openly called for the annexation of two eastern Ukrainian regions amid media reports of a possible escalation of hostilities.

Ukraine has been at war for control of the Donbass region after an uprising of pro-Russian separatists there in 2014. Russia has been accused of stoking the conflict that has claimed thousands of lives and displaced more than 1.6 million people, a charge that the Kremlin denies. Separatist leaders [quoted](#) by Russian state media have claimed that Kiev is readying an offensive in the region following the assassination of Alexander Zakharchenko, the leader of the self-proclaimed "Donetsk People's Republic," late last month.

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"If I were in the place of the president, I would immediately accept Donbass [into Russia],"

Zyuganov was [quoted](#) as saying by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency Monday.

Russia has recognized passports and other identification documents issued in separatist-held areas of eastern Ukraine, where the Russian ruble is already a commonly used currency, for a year and a half.

Zyuganov, who has been a staunch proponent of recognizing Donetsk and Luhansk as entities independent of Ukraine, suggested the annexation would bring an end to “the banditism.”

“I’m a supporter of continuing the Minsk process, but recognizing the republics won’t prevent this dialogue at all,” he [said](#) at a briefing following Russia’s local and regional elections, referring to the international Minsk peace talks.

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