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Refusal to Ease Sanctions Shows EU Doesn't Want Peace, Kremlin Says

By AFP

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Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. **AP / TASS**

The Kremlin said Friday that the European Union's refusal to lift sanctions on Russia demonstrates the bloc is not interested in an end to the war in Ukraine.

Moscow has demanded that the West remove sanctions from the state-owned Rosselkhozbank as a precondition for restoring a deal on the safe passage of Ukrainian cargo through the Black Sea.

"An integral part of the Black Sea deal is the lifting of sanctions on a Russian bank," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"If European countries don't want to go down this path, it means they don't want to go down the path of peace in unison with the efforts shown in Moscow and Washington," he added.

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The Black Sea Grain Initiative, brokered by Turkey and the UN in 2022, was designed to guarantee the safe export of Ukrainian agricultural products. However, Moscow withdrew from the deal in 2023, accusing the West of failing to lift sanctions it said were hampering its own agricultural and fertilizer exports.

Under EU sanctions, Rosselkhozbank was cut off from the SWIFT financial messaging network, restricting its ability to process international payments.

European leaders meeting in Paris on Thursday rejected any sanctions relief for Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said there was "complete clarity that now is not the time for the lifting of sanctions," arguing instead that they should be strengthened.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz echoed that view, calling sanctions relief a "grave mistake" and "makes no sense" without a ceasefire.

On Friday, Peskov also addressed Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent call to remove Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and install a "temporary administration" in Kyiv.

The Kremlin spokesman claimed there was a "total lack of control" over the Ukrainian army, accusing it of striking energy infrastructure "on a daily basis" despite an agreement to pause such attacks.

Peskov insisted that Russia would honor that commitment "for now."

"The Russian side reserves the right, if the Kyiv regime does not observe the moratorium, to abandon it as well," he warned.

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