

Ukraine Rejects U.S. Criticism of Elections

By [The Moscow Times](#)

December 01, 2012

The  **Moscow Times**

WASHINGTON — Ukraine's foreign minister has rejected criticism by the United States of recent parliamentary elections and of the government's prosecution of political opponents.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton sharply criticized Ukraine in a broad speech about U.S. relations with Europe last week. She called October's parliamentary elections, which were deemed unfair by Western observers, a step backward for democracy. She said the U.S. was deeply concerned about Ukrainian prosecution of opponents.

But Foreign Minister Kostyantyn Gryshchenko said in an interview Friday that the election results matched the will of the people.

"We are hearing the criticism," he said of Clinton's speech. "We understand the importance of changing the perception that was created lately, which — and I would like to stress — does not reflect fully, or even in large part, the reality of Ukraine."

Gryshchenko was in Washington for a conference organized by a Ukrainian-American group.

Gryshchenko also denied the prosecution of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko was politically motivated.

The U.S., as well as European countries, have been particularly critical of the prosecution of Tymoshenko, who was jailed last year on charges of abusing her office.

Gryshchenko said that the relationship with the United States was better than the recent criticism made it seem and that the two countries are cooperating on a broad range of issues.

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