

U.S. Lawmakers Say Violence Against Ukraine Protesters Could Be Met By Sanctions

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The U.S. Senate has called for possible sanctions against those officials responsible for the crackdown on Ukrainian demonstrators protesting their government's decision to bail out of an association agreement with the European Union.

"In the event of further state violence against peaceful protesters, the President and Congress should consider whether to apply targeted sanctions, including visa bans and asset freezes, against individuals responsible for ordering or carrying out the violence," lawmakers said in a resolution passed by the Senate on Tuesday.

Mass protests broke out across Ukraine after its government surprised friend and foe on Nov. 21 by announcing that it would indefinitely postpone the signing of association and trade deals with the bloc. The protests took a more radical turn after riot police cleared Kiev's

Independence Square on Nov. 30.

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's government strengthened ties with Russia last month, striking a \$15 billion bailout package with Russian President Vladimir Putin to stabilize Ukraine's finances.

In the Senate resolution passed on Tuesday, U.S. lawmakers criticized the U-turn as having been against the will of the Ukrainian people, the result of "Russian economic coercion," and intended "to protect the narrow interests of some officials and individuals."

Yanukovich's government appeared to take the resolution in stride, with the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry saying Wednesday that it considers the adoption of the initiative to be "a sign of support for the European choice of our country and its democratic development."

"The Government of Ukraine remains committed to the strategic course towards European integration and continuation of democratic reforms," the ministry said in a statement.

The ministry also welcomed U.S. lawmakers' call for all sides to refrain from violence, saying it is "fully consistent" with the Ukrainian government's approach and noted that Yanukovich has "condemned the use of force on the part of law enforcement agencies and individual protesters."

Russia has repeatedly criticized what it describes as outside interference in the tense standoff between Ukrainian authorities and protesters.

Officials in Europe and the United States, meanwhile, have accused Russia of using economic levers to pressure Kiev into closer integration with its ex-Soviet neighbor — a charge Russian officials have denied.

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