

Ukraine Opposition Signs Deal With Yanukovych

By [Matthew Bodner](#)

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President Viktor Yanukovych and the opposition signing the agreement. (Presidential Administration website / YouTube)

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych and opposition leaders have signed an EU-mediated agreement aimed at ending the crisis that has engulfed the country.

The deal was signed by opposition leaders Vitali Klitschko, Arseny Yatsenyuk and Oleh Tyahnybok under the guidance of the German, French, and Polish Foreign Ministers.

However, Kremlin envoy Vladimir Lukin did not sign the document, and has returned to Moscow.

Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski was overheard dishing out "tough love diplomacy" to an opposition leader prior to the deal being signed.

"If you don't support this deal you will have martial law, the army. You'll be dead," Sikorski said after emerging from a meeting, ITV News reported, in an indication of how desperate the situation had become.

A statement carrying a slightly less confrontational tone was then issued after the agreement was signed.

The ministers "commend the parties for their courage and commitment to the agreement and call for an immediate end to all violence and confrontation in Ukraine," the German Foreign Ministry said on its website.

The agreement stipulates that presidential elections will be held no later than December and that reforms restricting the power of the president must be put in place by September.

Furthermore, both sides must refrain from using violence, and an investigation into the recent clashes will be carried out with the involvement of the Council of Europe.



A triumphant Radoslaw Sikorski in central Kiev. (Twitter / Radoslaw Sikorski)

After the signing, the parliament voted to restore the 2004 constitution and approved a full amnesty for demonstrators involved in peaceful protests since Nov. 21, the day that the street movement got under way in response to the government's decision to turn its back on a trade deal with the EU.

The parliament later voted to fire Interior Minister Zakharchenko, believed to have ordered violent crackdowns on protesters, The Kyiv Post reported.

It also amended a law that could pave the way for the release of jailed opposition leader, Yulia Tymoshenko.

And yet, fears persist that Maidan protesters will refuse to recognize the agreement and push for Yanukovich to resign.

The deal contains several possible sticking points for protesters, including the need for roads and squares to be unblocked, illegal weapons to be handed over, and public buildings vacated.

The head of the Right Sector, a militant opposition group, wrote on his Vkontakte page that his group rejected the deal, calling it an attempt at "window dressing" by Yanukovich.

The group called for the immediate arrest of Zakharchenko, as well as the commanders of Berkut units and snipers believed to have fired on civilians.

Protesters on Independence Square told reporters from NBC that they won't accept deal "with a killer," in a clear reference to Yanukovich.

The Ukrainian Health Ministry published a list of 77 people, most of them civilians, who have died since Tuesday. Eleven police officers were killed in the riots.

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