

Ukraine Opposition Calls for Ouster as Yanukovych's Whereabouts Remain Unknown

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Opposition figures in Ukraine signaled their intent Saturday to seek the ouster of President Viktor Yanukovych in parliament and call elections by the end of May as the government showed signs of total capitulation following days of bloody protests.

Yanukovych loyalist and parliament speaker Volodymyr Rybak announced his resignation on Saturday for health reasons. The decision came on the heels of the resignation of dozens of deputies from the ruling Party of Regions.

Speaking in the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's parliament, UDAR party leader and opposition activist Vitali Klitschko said deputies should consider a resolution for elections to be held before May 25 and force the president to resign.

As rumors abounded about Yanukovych's whereabouts — some reports suggested he had left

Kiev for the city of Kharkiv in the ethnic Russian-dominated east, where his main support base is located — anti-government demonstrators freely wandered around the district.

Developments on Saturday came a day after parliament granted a key opposition demand by restoring the 2004 constitution, designed to limit presidential powers and make Ukraine a parliamentary republic. A deal overseen by EU envoys and a Kremlin-appointed mediator required an interim government to be formed in the coming days.

The agreement between the government and the opposition coincided with the withdrawal of riot police from an area in downtown Kiev where most government buildings are located, including the parliament, the Cabinet of ministers and the presidential administration.

The street violence seen in Ukraine's capital this week is the worst the nation has seen since it gained independence in 1991.

Mass protests initially erupted in late November after the government backed away from deals to deepen political and economic cooperation with the European Union and instead opted for closer ties with Russia.

Rallies then took on a more general anti-government quality, calling for the president's ouster and early elections.

The months-long demonstrations have seen outbursts of violence between protesters and police, but the scale of bloodshed in the past few days marked an escalation that provoked international outrage and forced authorities to mediate a negotiated solution to the unrest.

Authorities say around 80 people have died, although opposition parties believe the real number may be much greater. The Health Ministry said Saturday more than 600 were injured over five days of fighting.

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