

# Ukrainian TV Channels Blocked in Crimea for 'Moral and Legal' Reasons

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March 10, 2014

**The**  **Moscow Times**

The Crimean administration has taken Ukrainian television channels off air and replaced them with Russian broadcasts ahead of a planned referendum on the peninsula becoming part of Russia, an official has said.

Regional information minister Dmitry Polonsky, who has accused the Ukrainian channels of toeing the line of the "illegitimate Kiev authorities," said Sunday that the broadcasts have been blocked for "moral and legal" reasons.

"Since the Crimean Supreme Council made a decision about joining Russia — and we are only waiting for the referendum to confirm that — Crimea has no longer been subject to Ukrainian legislation," Polonsky said Sunday, Itar-Tass reported.

"We believe that we have the right to protect the residents of Crimea for the escalation of violence, lies and the flow of untrue information that had been flowing from the screens."

Crimean journalist Zair Akadyrov said Sunday on his Facebook page that Ukrainian national television channels and independent local broadcasters had been taken off air, with Russia's state-run networks broadcasting in their place.

However, Crimea's deputy premier Olga Kovitidi said the Ukrainian channels were down for "technical reasons" and that their broadcasts would be restored when experts figure out what caused the glitch, Interfax reported.

Earlier this month, Crimean authorities removed from air the popular independent broadcaster Chernomorskaya Teleradiokompaniya, or Black Sea television, and dozens of armed masked men stormed the office of the Center for Investigative Journalism.

Meanwhile in Kiev, the deputy secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council last week called on television and radio authorities to consider revising the licensing conditions of Russian channels in the country, Rosbalt Ukraine reported Thursday.

Russian television channels routinely portray Ukraine as being gripped by violence at the hands of "neo-Nazis" from the protest movement that toppled the previous administration, and follow the Kremlin's line of saying that Moscow had to intervene in the Crimea to protect Russian-speakers.

"Given that the information war in Ukraine has seriously intensified, we appeal to the members of the [broadcasting body] to consider the situation that has developed in Ukraine's information space and presents a threat to national security" deputy secretary Victoria Syumar said in support of a Russian-license review.

Ukrainian broadcaster Lanet said Tuesday on its website that it was suspending three Russian channels — Pervy Kanal, NTV Mir and RTR-Planeta — from broadcast on its network due to "aggressive propaganda and incitement to war."

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