

Russia Urges Ukraine to Disarm 'Extremist Groups'

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The  **Moscow Times**

A senior Russian official has welcomed a call by three EU members for Ukraine's government to distance itself from "extremist groups" and speed up the process of disarming them.

The foreign ministers of France, Germany and Poland urged Kiev on Monday to implement the key principles of a Feb. 21 deal intended to end a standoff between anti-government protesters and Moscow-backed President Viktor Yanukovich.

The deal, brokered by the three EU member states, included a call for groups involved in the protests to hand over illegal weapons. Russia has repeatedly said the deal must be implemented and radical groups should be disarmed.

"The ministers ... called for an end to the lawlessness in Ukraine, and this is extremely important," Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin said Tuesday, Interfax reported.

Earlier on Tuesday, members of the Ukrainian ultranationalist group Right Sector were forced to [surrender](#) their weapons following a standoff with the police in the aftermath of a shooting

in central Kiev.

Ukraine's parliament on Tuesday also ordered security forces to disarm illegal armed groups.

Moscow says Russian speakers in Ukraine are under threat from far-right militants whom it describes as neo-fascists. It has accused the EU of encouraging the protests and not doing enough to persuade Kiev to rein in far-right groups.

The Feb. 21 deal was signed by Yanukovich and his opponents one day before before he fled Kiev and was ousted by parliament.

In their statement, the three ministers encouraged the Kiev government to "accelerate the ongoing process of disarmament, re-establish the state monopoly on the use of force as well as distance itself from extremist groups."

They also urged Russia to "refrain from any further escalation" and reduce troops numbers near Ukraine's border.

Material from The Moscow Times has been included in this report.

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