

Malta Refuses to Refuel Russian Warships

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Pavlos Vrionides / AP

Malta's Foreign Minister George Vella has said that no Russian warship will refuel in Malta, the Times of Malta newspaper reported. The minister would not confirm or deny whether or not the Russian naval flotilla currently heading toward Syria actually requested a refueling stop in Malta, however.

While the foreign minister would not comment on whether the refusal was based on constitutional or ethical grounds, his statement was a reaction to an internet petition by an online campaign group called Avaaz. The group's petition suggested that the Russian battle group might seek to refuel in Malta after being turned down by the Spanish government.

"Avaazers in Spain just stopped this death fleet from refueling there. Let's urgently tell the Maltese government that we do not want to be complicit in war crimes and demand they prohibit entry," their online statement read.

Read this week's *Moscow Times* [cover story on the Kuznetsov battle group](#), and the

motivations behind the deployment.

The statement also claimed that Spain's refusal to allow the ships to refuel in Spanish-controlled Morocco was also prompted by an Avaaz petition, though the Russian navy claims it withdrew its request to the Spanish government before they refused.

The petition claimed the fleet was carrying planes and arms bound for Syria, where they would join other Russian forces in air strikes in support of the Assad government.

The Russian battle group, featuring Russia's only aircraft carrier the Admiral Kuznetsov, has been making waves since it set sail around the continent on a voyage to Syria.

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