

# Chess Star Karyakin Defends Support for Russian Crimea

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Richard Drew / AP

Russian chess grandmaster Sergei Karyakin has defended his outspoken support for Russia's annexation of Crimea.

“I have my opinion, and I have the right to express it,” Karyakin said in an exclusive interview with The Moscow Times. “If that offends anyone, there's nothing I can do. It's my opinion and not a bargaining chip.”

Karyakin, who was born in the Crimean city of Simferopol, has been a vocal supporter of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The 26-year-old grandmaster represented Ukraine in international competitions until 2009, when he began representing Russia.

**Embed:**



Поздравляю подругу детства Катю Лагно с получением российского гражданства!👍👍

A photo posted by Sergey Karjakin (@sergey\_karjakin) on Jul 22, 2014 at 9:51am PDT

He placed second in the 2016 World Chess Championship last week, eventually losing a dramatic tiebreak match to Norway's Magnus Carlsen.

“Of course, I was really upset that I lost, but the match was relentless, so there's nothing for me to be ashamed of,” Karyakin told The Moscow Times. “I did everything I could, but I just fell slightly short.”

Karyakin, who became the world's youngest grandmaster at the age of 12, pledged to bring a

chess world champion title back to Russia in the future.

“Russia has always had a strong chess tradition,” he said, but Russia no longer dominates the field as Soviet players did.

“We have not become worse,” Karyakin said, “but our competition has just gotten stronger.”

*Eva Hartog contributed to this report.*

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