



TOP STORIES

RUSSIA

G8 suspended as standoff between world powers and Russia escalates

The Group of 8 will not meet until Russia "changes course," the seven other member nations have announced in a joint statement. A summit scheduled by the group in Sochi has been moved to Brussels, with Moscow excluded.

G7 leaders meet in The Hague

Leaders of all member G8 nations - the United States, Japan, Germany, Italy, France, Canada and Britain - bar Russia met at The Hague in the Netherlands on Monday. Originally scheduled to center around nuclear security issues, [talks are instead being dominated](#) by Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and [the possible sanctions](#) it could now face from its fellow world powers.

"We remain ready to intensify actions including coordinated sectoral sanctions that will have an increasingly significant impact on the Russian economy if Russia continues to escalate this situation," a statement from the seven nations said, with a G7 summit now set for Brussels in June.

"... Under these circumstances, we will not participate in the planned Sochi summit. We will suspend our participation in the G8 until Russia changes course and the environment comes back

to where the G8 is able to have a meaningful discussion."

"We stand firm in our support for the people of Ukraine who seek to restore unity, democracy, political stability, and economic prosperity to their country," it said.

Banishment from the group had been a prospect raised by US Secretary of State John Kerry before Monday's meeting began. That outcome was addressed by Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov after talks with Ukraine's interim counterpart Andriy Deshchychysya and Kerry on the sidelines of the meeting in The Hague.

"If our Western partners think that this format has outlived itself, then so be it. At the very least, we are not trying to hold on to this format, and we see no great tragedy if it [the G8] does not meet," he told reporters before the release of the G7 statement.

"The G8 is an informal club, there are no membership cards. Nobody can throw anybody out," he said, adding: "All important issues are now discussed in the G20."

Lavrov said Russia stood by its intervention in Crimea, [which was annexed on Friday](#) after the fall of Ukraine's pro-Kremlin regime in February. He said Crimea had a "right to self-determination," and that there was no "malicious intent" to Russia's actions. Instead, it was to "protect the Russians who have been living there for hundreds of years."

Xi, Obama meet

Before the G7 leaders had met, US President Barack Obama had spoken with China counterpart Xi Jinping. "China supports the constructive efforts made by the international community to ease tension, and holds an open attitude toward all plans that are helpful to promote a political solution," Xi said, according to China's Xinhua news agency. A regular ally of Russia, China elected to abstain from voting on a United Nations Security Council resolution declaring Crimea's secession referendum illegal.

Earlier on Monday, Russian troops seized control of the Ukraine's Feodosia naval base in Crimea. Russia has [already claimed several other military bases](#), with Feodosia previously considered one of the final bastions of resistance.

Ukraine's acting president Oleksander Turchinov told the country's parliament on Monday that remaining troops would be withdrawn from Crimea due to the "threats" from Russia's military.

ph/hc (dpa, AFP, AP, Reuters)

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» [Russia stands to be hit harder by economic sanctions than EU](#)

A leading German think-tank has claimed Russia would be hit harder by economic sanctions than the 28-member EU in case of a complete trade embargo by the West over the Crimea conflict. But it didn't advise to impose it. (24.03.2014)

» [Ukraine crisis set to overshadow nuclear talks](#)

US President Barack Obama expressed support for Ukraine on arrival in the Netherlands for crisis talks about Russia's annexation of Crimea. It comes as Russian troops seize another Crimean military base. (24.03.2014)



» Pro-Russian forces seize Ukrainian air base as Steinmeier visits Kyiv

Russian troops have seized a Ukrainian air base in Crimea amid gunfire. Meanwhile, Germany's foreign minister is in the country for talks a day after Russia completed its annexation of the Black Sea peninsula. (23.03.2014)



» Russian President Vladimir Putin signs laws completing annexation of Crimea

President Vladimir Putin has signed legislation to absorb Crimea into the Russian Federation. This formally ends the process of the annexation of the Ukrainian territory. (21.03.2014)

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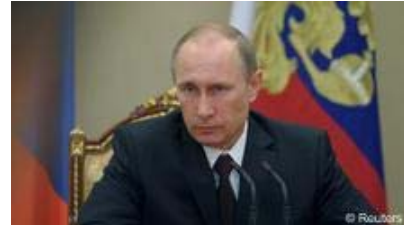
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The United Nations has condemned the "targeted killings" of civilians in South Sudan based on ethnicity or nationality. Hundreds of people have been killed since rebels seized a key oil town last week.



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US President Barack Obama says Russian actions in southeastern Ukraine aren't conducive to a peaceful resolution. [▶](#)

Moscow disagrees.

Putin warns Merkel of civil war in Ukraine 16.04.2014

Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned German Chancellor Angela Merkel that Ukraine is on the verge of a civil war. Putin's warning comes after Kyiv deployed troops against Pro-Moscow separatists in eastern Ukraine.

military.

Putin tells Obama no Russian involvement in Ukraine unrest 14.04.2014

In a phone call with US President Obama, Russian President Putin has denied accusations that Moscow stirred up the current unrest in Ukraine. Meanwhile, the White House has confirmed that the CIA director visited Kyiv.