

# *Russia Says West Sanctions on Kiev Blackmail*

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Moscow, February 21 (RHC)-- Russia has said the threat of sanctions against Ukraine is an attempt to blackmail Kiev by the West, accusing Ukrainian opposition hardliners of seeking a civil war. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov made the statements on Thursday, as tensions remain high in the Ukrainian capital Kiev after renewed violence.

Lavrov also accused the European Union and the United States of having double standards on Ukraine by laying the blame on the Ukrainian government and not criticizing the actions of "extremists." This comes as European officials say they are considering targeted sanctions against the Ukrainian government over the violence.

Meanwhile, deadly clashes between anti-government protesters and Ukrainian police continued on Thursday. According to the country's Health Ministry, at least 28 people, including police officers, have died since the beginning of the week when the violence broke out.

Ukraine's Interior Ministry said protesters have taken 67 police officers hostage. The

ministry also said the demonstrators have tried to storm the presidential administration building in Kiev.

Ukraine has been rocked by anti-government protests since Yanukovich refrained from signing an Association Agreement with the European Union on November 29th last year, in favor of closer ties with Russia.

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