

# *Russian Foreign Minister Slams Threats of Sanctions*

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Geneva, March 4 (RHC)-- Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has criticized the threats of “sanctions and boycotts” against the country over its alleged role in Ukraine’s ongoing crisis.

At the opening session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on Monday, Lavrov said those who speak of sanctions are the ones that “ultimately polarized Ukrainian society.” He also emphasized that the interests of the Ukrainian people should be considered first.

"I call upon them to show responsibility and to set aside pure political calculations and put the interest of the Ukrainian people above all," he stated. This came after the U.S. and the EU had warned Russia of the consequences of its troop deployment in Ukraine.

Lavrov also said that the presence of Russian troops in Ukraine's Crimean peninsula is necessary to protect the country’s citizens.

The Russian foreign minister urged the new government of Ukraine to respect the February 21st agreement signed by ousted President Viktor Yanukovich, which was aimed at terminating the crisis in the country. And he slammed the opposition leaders because they “did nothing” to implement the deal.

"The illegal arms have not been relinquished. The government buildings and streets of Kiev have not been completely freed. Radicals maintain control of cities," Lavrov said.

Ukraine has been gripped by unrest since November 2013, when now-ousted president, Yanukovich, refrained from signing an Association Agreement with the European Union in favor of closer ties with Russia.

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