

Ukraine's Donetsk proclaimed independent republic



Kiev, Apr 7, (RHC), – Pro-Russia protesters in eastern Ukrainian city of Donetsk have proclaimed the creation of the independent People's Republic of Donetsk.

The announcement was made by a spokesperson for the demonstrators outside a local administration building, currently occupied by thousands of pro-Russia supporters.

Meanwhile, members of the regional legislature in Donetsk decided to hold a referendum on whether or not the city should join the Russian Federation by May 11, local media reported.

The protesters are now reportedly in control of several regional state offices in the industrial city, including the state administration building.

The demonstrators have appealed to Russia to send peacekeeping forces into their now independent region.

In the nearby city of Kharkiv, clashes have erupted between pro-Moscow and pro-Kiev

protesters. According to reports, several people have been injured.

Pro-Russia rallies have been a common scene across eastern Ukrainian cities over the past weeks.

Demonstrators in the country's eastern regions, which are largely Russian-speaking, have called for a variety of responses to a new government in Kiev that came to power in a parliamentary coup in February.

The demonstrations gained momentum after Ukraine's Crimean territory declared independence from the former Soviet state and formally applied to become part of the Russian Federation following a referendum on March 16, in which nearly 97 percent of the participants voted for rejoining Russia.

On March 21, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed into law documents that officially made the Black Sea peninsula part of the Russian territory despite condemnation from the West and the new Ukrainian government.

The Ukrainian crisis began last November when the country's then president, Viktor Yanukovich, refrained from signing an Association Agreement with the European Union in favor of closer ties with Moscow.

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