

Local 'Anti-Maidan' Movement Declares Establishment of Odessa People's Republic

By [Ria Novosti](#)
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Supporters of federalization of Ukraine during a rally in Odessa.

KIEV, April 16 (RIA Novosti) – The Odessa region's "Anti-Maidan" movement has declared the establishment of an Odessa People's Republic and called on residents to block police and military troops from entering the city, a statement on the group's website said Wednesday.

"Beginning today, the Odessa region becomes the People's Republic of Odessa, where the power belongs only to the people living on its territory," the statement said.

Activists also urged city residents to block traffic and prevent police and military forces from entering the city.

"At 4:00 p.m. tomorrow, Odessa must be blocked! Literally," the appeal said.

On Tuesday, the Ukrainian army started a special operation to crackdown on self-defense activists in eastern Ukraine. At least four protesters were killed and two others wounded as Ukrainian troops stormed an airfield in Kramatorsk, local pro-federalization supporters said.

East Ukraine has been swept by pro-federalization rallies since last month. Demonstrators in Kharkiv, Donetsk, Gorlovka, Sloviansk and Kramatorsk refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the current Ukrainian government and are urging interim authorities to hold referendums similar to the one in Crimea last month, which led to the republic's reunification with Russia.

Russia condemned the decision by the new Ukrainian authorities to use force against the federalization supporters, saying it was an extremely unpleasant turn of events.

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