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Ukraine president signs deal with opposition

2/21/2014

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich has signed a deal with the opposition to form a new government and to end the deadly political crisis that has engulfed the country during the past three months.

President Yanukovich met with three opposition leaders - Oleh Tyahnybok, Vitali Klitschko and Arseniy Yatsenyuk - at the presidential headquarters in Kiev on Friday to sign the deal.

The agreement came after lengthy discussions between President Yanukovich, the opposition and European Union ministers from Poland, Germany and France.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said the agreement sets an early presidential election for this year, although no date has been agreed upon yet.

In a statement posted on his website, Yanukovich promised to revert to the country's 2004 constitution, which will also trim presidential powers.

He said he would push to form a coalition government amid the country's worst crisis since independence.

Over the past three days, violent street clashes between opposition protesters and security forces left nearly 100 protesters dead and the heart of Kiev is similar to a war zone, the government reported.

The opposition, however, claims that the death toll is higher.

Protests began in Ukraine in November, following the government's refusal to sign a major trade deal with the EU.

Kiev and Moscow reached a strategic economic and trade deal last December, which provides Ukraine with significant discounts on imported Russian gas and billions of dollars in credit.