

Is it the end of the line for Black Sea grain deal? Or is it Russian brinkmanship?

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Russia has submitted concerns to the UN about the agreement between Russia, Ukraine, the UN and Turkey about the Black Sea grain corridor, agreed in July to facilitate exports of grain from three Ukrainian ports on the Black Sea. Russia is reportedly prepared to reject the renewal of the deal next month unless its demands are accommodated, Russia's Geneva UN ambassador Gennady Gatilov told *Reuters* last week.

Under the agreement Russia won guarantees for its own grain and fertilizer exports. Russia and Ukraine are two of the world's biggest grain exporters and Russia is the leading exporter of fertilizer. However, Russia has expressed concerns that the implementation of the agreement has varied from that which was agreed, noting that it was still facing difficulties selling fertilizer and food.

Gatilov said that Russia had delivered a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Wednesday October 12th that listed its complaints. "If we see nothing is happening on the Russian side of the deal – export of Russian grains and fertilizers – then excuse us, we will have to look at it in a different way," he said.

UN officials were due in Moscow on October 16th to discuss the renewal of the agreement.

Asked if Russia might withhold support for the grains deal's renewal over the concerns, he said: "There is a possibility... We are not against deliveries of grains, but this deal should be equal, it should be fair and fairly implemented by all sides." Gatilov also told *Reuters* that prospects for a negotiated peace were receding, particularly following the attack on the Kerch Strait bridge. "All this makes it more difficult to reach a political solution," he said