

Belarus to Host Crisis Talks Between Russia, Ukraine and OSCE

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia's President Vladimir Putin (L) and Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko take part in a ceremony to mark the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Belarus from Nazi occupation, at the Belarusian State Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Minsk.

Belarus will host talks between Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE security and rights organization on the crisis in eastern Ukraine, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko's office said Wednesday.

It did not say when the talks would take place but Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko asked Lukashenko to host them on Thursday and to focus on securing access to the site where a Malaysian airliner was brought down in east Ukraine.

There was no indication pro-Russian separatists fighting Ukraine's army would attend the talks, although Lukashenko's office said "all interested sides" were invited.

The talks are expected to involve Russia's ambassador to Kiev, Mikhail Zurabov, and former Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma, who have met several times since the crisis in Ukraine began but have failed to secure a breakthrough.

The fighting in eastern Ukraine prevented representatives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe reaching the crash site on Tuesday for the third successive day.

"Decisions are being made on a political level on ensuring safety on the site," Michael Bociurkiw, a spokesman for the OSCE in Ukraine said Wednesday. "Today, as far as we know, we will not be going there."

An OSCE convoy had earlier Wednesday been stopped by rebels about 10 kilometers outside the city of Donetsk because of fighting further along the route, but OSCE officials later denied it had been trying to reach the crash site.

Poroshenko wants the talks in Minsk to also discuss the release of hostages that Kiev says are being held by the rebels in east Ukraine, the Ukrainian presidency said in a statement on Facebook.

He appears to have turned to Belarus for help because the former Soviet republic is a Moscow ally but also has a solid relationship with Ukraine.

The regional authorities in Donetsk, one of the regions worst hit by the fighting in east Ukraine, said Wednesday morning that 19 people had been killed in the past 24 hours.

Kiev's military offensive has forced the rebels out of some areas they held except their strongholds in and around the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk, and fighting has intensified since the deaths of 298 people when the airliner was brought down on July 17.

The West says the rebels probably shot the plane down by mistake and accuses Russia of arming them. Moscow denies this.

See also:

[Malaysian Plane Crashes in Conflict-Torn Eastern Ukraine](#)

[OSCE Barred From Accessing Crash Site by 'Intoxicated' Gunmen](#)

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