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EU Must Seek 'Direct Contact' With Putin: Merkel

By AFP

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Merkel said the EU should seek direct talks with Putin even as it stands together against "provocations" from Russia. **John Thys / EPA / TASS**

The European Union should seek direct talks with President Vladimir Putin even as it stands together against "provocations" from Russia, said Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel on Thursday.

"In my opinion, we as the European Union must also seek direct contact with Russia and the Russian president," she told parliament.

"It is not enough for the American president to talk to the Russian president," she said, stressing that the European Union too "must also create different formats for talks."

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Putin and U.S. President Joe Biden held face-to-face talks last week, in a meeting that both said could lead to a more predictable, albeit still tense, relationship.

Merkel said recent events had shown that it was not enough "if we react to the multitude of Russian provocations in an uncoordinated manner."

Rather, the 27-member bloc should put up "a united front against the provocations."

Moscow is at loggerheads with a number of Western capitals after a Russian troop build-up on Ukraine's borders and a series of espionage scandals that have resulted in diplomatic expulsions.

In a latest case adding to tensions, Germany arrested a Russian scientist working at a German university, accusing him of spying for Moscow.

The ongoing detention of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, who received treatment in Berlin after a near-fatal poisoning, has also sparked outrage in the EU.

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