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Russia, France, Germany May Meet on Ukraine

By AFP

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The Kremlin did not say in its statement if Ukraine would take part in the meeting. **Ian Langsdon / EPA / TASS**

Russia, France and Germany said Monday that their foreign ministers could soon meet to discuss the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Moscow said President Vladimir Putin, his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel instructed the ministers to work toward a meeting during a joint telephone call Monday.

According to the Kremlin, it would take place within the framework of the "Normandy Four" — which usually brings together officials from Moscow and Kiev under the mediation of Paris and Berlin.

The Kremlin did not say in its statement if Ukraine would take part in the meeting.

However France's presidency said that it should involve Ukraine.

The presidency also said in a statement that Macron and Merkel held a phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy before speaking to Putin.

Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert also confirmed the plans for the meeting, for which a date has not yet been set.

The Kremlin said the leaders had instructed their foreign ministers to "intensify their contacts and work" after a "difficult" situation in eastern Ukraine.

The leaders also agreed to consider organizing a summit, the Russian and German statements said.

During the phone call, Putin accused the Kiev authorities of "stubbornly evading" fulfilling agreements reached at peace talks.

France and Germany have been mediators in the conflict between Kiev and pro-Moscow separatists since 2015 in the so-called Normandy format and have been overseeing a fragile ceasefire.

Angela Merkel visited both Moscow and Kiev in August.

Afterward, she then expressed her hope that peace talks on the conflict between Kiev and pro-Russia separatists would continue after she left power.

The Ukrainian army is locked in a simmering conflict with breakaway fighters in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions that erupted after Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula in 2014.

The conflict has claimed more than 13,000 lives.

Ukraine and its Western allies accuse Russia of sending troops and arms to support the separatists, which Moscow denies.

The European Union on Monday imposed sanctions on eight more officials accused of targeting opponents of Russia's seizure of Crimea, ahead of a visit to Kiev by the bloc's top officials.

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