

# Kremlin Denies Abramovich Poisoned, Confirms Role in Talks

By [AFP](#)

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Roman Abramovich attends a round of Russian-Ukrainian talks Tuesday at Istanbul's Dolmabahce Palace. **Sergei Karpukhin / TASS**

The Kremlin on Tuesday denied a report that Chelsea Football Club owner Roman Abramovich was poisoned while taking part in peace talks over Ukraine, but confirmed he is acting as an intermediary.

The Wall Street Journal reported Monday that Abramovich and Ukrainian negotiators were targets of a suspected poison attack, potentially by Moscow hardliners seeking to sabotage peace talks.

"This is part of information sabotage, part of an information war," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists.

"It goes without saying that these reports do not correspond to reality."

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A source familiar with the matter earlier confirmed the report to AFP, stating: "Unfortunately this took place, what the Wall Street Journal reported."

After a meeting in Ukraine's capital, Abramovich and at least two senior Ukrainian negotiators developed symptoms including red eyes, painfully watery eyes, and peeling skin on their face and hands, according to sources cited by Wall Street Journal.

Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak did not confirm the incident.

Peskov said the billionaire businessman, who has been placed on Western sanctions lists along with other oligarchs, is participating in Tuesday's talks in Istanbul.

RIA Novosti state news agency reported that Abramovich spoke to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday morning before the talks began.

"He is not an official member of the (Russian) delegation" at the negotiations, but is "involved in ensuring certain contacts between the Russian and Ukrainian sides," Peskov said.

This role requires approval from both sides, the Kremlin spokesman said. "In the case of Abramovich, the approval is there."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Sunday his government had received offers of support from Russian businessmen, including Abramovich, who owns and is seeking to sell Chelsea and has had longstanding links to President Vladimir Putin.

Zelensky told journalists the businessmen had said they wanted to "do something" and "help somehow" to de-escalate Russia's military assault on Ukraine that has left thousands dead.

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