

St. Petersburg Vows to Restore Destroyed 'Sister' City Mariupol

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A tank crew of the Donetsk People's Republic "people's militia" drives through Mariupol. **Vladimir Gerdo / TASS**

St. Petersburg will establish a sister city relationship with the southern Ukrainian city of Mariupol and help in its restoration, Governor Alexander Beglov [said](#) Tuesday.

Russian forces claimed full control of Mariupol after the city's last Ukrainian defenders surrendered at the Azovstal steel plant last week, ending a devastating, nearly three-month siege that has flattened the city and killed thousands.

“Mariupol is going through a difficult stage today and we’re ready to assist in its revival,” Beglov said, vowing to establish construction, housing and utilities, healthcare, education and cultural ties between Russia's second-largest city and the strategic Ukrainian port.

Beglov plans to sign a sister city agreement with Mariupol’s Moscow-installed mayor Konstantin Ivashchenko “as soon as possible,” the St. Petersburg administration’s website said after phone talks between Beglov, Ivashchenko and separatist Donetsk People’s Republic

leader Denis Pushilin.

Pushilin [said](#) last week that 60% of homes in Mariupol are “beyond repair.”

Meanwhile, Moscow will reportedly “[adopt](#)” and likely finance infrastructure projects in the separatist pro-Russian cities of Donetsk and Luhansk, the RBC news website reported Monday, citing an unnamed source close to the Moscow Mayor’s Office.

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If confirmed, the Russian capital will be at least the seventh Russian federal subject to publicly pledge infrastructure support in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions known collectively as the Donbas, according to RBC.

“Officials from Russia will solve problems easier and faster than local officials who don’t know what to start on,” RBC quoted one of its federal sources as saying.

Beglov's statement comes amid increasing signals that Russia could permanently occupy territories it has captured during its three-month invasion of Ukraine.

President Vladimir Putin recognized both Donetsk and Luhansk as independent republics in the run-up to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in late February. Both the separatist leaders of the Donbas and Moscow-appointed authorities in captured Ukrainian territories have indicated they would like to become part of Russia.

The Kremlin has publicly rejected claims that Russia was seeking to permanently occupy captured Ukrainian territories, emphasizing the “[will of the people](#)” on future decisions.

One-fifth of Ukrainian territory — including annexed Crimea, the Donbas, as well as the Kharkiv, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions captured during the 2022 invasion — is currently under Russian occupation, according to Forbes Ukraine’s [calculations](#).

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