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Russia, Ukraine Agree to Swap 200 Prisoners – Erdogan

By AFP

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Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Vladimir Putin at the summit in Uzbekistan. **kremlin.ru**

Russia and Ukraine have agreed to swap 200 prisoners in one of the largest exchanges of the seven-month war, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told US television.

Erdogan made the announcement after talks last week with Russian President Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of a regional summit in Uzbekistan.

Erdogan did not provide full details about the swap, calling the people being exchanged "hostages" and not saying how many there were from each side.

"Two hundred hostages will be exchanged upon agreement between the parties. I think a significant step will be taken forward," Erdogan told PBS television late Monday.

NATO member Turkey has tried to stay neutral in the conflict, supplying combat drones to Kyiv and shying away from Western-led sanctions against Moscow.

Erdogan said he had the "impression" that Putin was willing to end the war.

"We had very extensive discussions and he is actually showing me that he is willing to end this as soon as possible," Erdogan said.

"That was my impression because the way things are going right now are quite problematic."

Erdogan said Russia's return of captured lands would be an important part of any lasting truce.

"If peace is going to be established in Ukraine, of course returning the land that was invaded will become important," he said.

Asked repeatedly if Putin should be held responsible for invading Ukraine, Erdogan said there was no benefit in taking sides.

"We are not going to defend a single leader. Instead, we have to look for a solution that will satisfy all the parties involved."

Erdogan has repeatedly tried to bring Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky together in Turkey for truce talks.

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