

Kyiv Attacked as African Peace Mission Visits Ukraine

By [Anna Malpas for AFP](#)

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South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and Ukraine's Prosecutor General Andriy Kostin visit a site of a mass grave, in the town of Bucha. **Valentyn Ogirenko / Reuters**

A barrage of Russian missiles greeted a delegation of African leaders arriving in Kyiv on Friday as part of a mission aiming to broker peace between Russia and Ukraine.

The high-level diplomatic team hopes to bring to the table the voice of a continent that has badly suffered from repercussion of the Ukraine war, including by rising grain prices.

Analysts told AFP the African mission's chances to secure peace looked incredibly thin as both Moscow and Kyiv were convinced they can win on the battlefield.

Shortly after their arrival in the Kyiv region was announced, air raid sirens sounded in the capital and across the country, as Russian missiles were detected.

"(Russian President Vladimir) Putin 'builds confidence' by launching the largest missile

attack on Kyiv in weeks, exactly amid the visit of African leaders to our capital," Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said.

The African delegation began their visit in Bucha, a town outside the capital that has become a symbol of the alleged war crimes carried out by Moscow.

The delegation that was later due to hold talks with Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky includes four presidents: South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa, Senegal's Macky Sall and Zambia's Hakainde Hichilema, plus Comoros' Azali Assoumani, who heads the African Union.

The leaders of Uganda, Egypt and Congo-Brazzaville pulled out of the visit at the last moment and sent representatives instead.

The visit comes as Ukraine has announced gains in its offensive, but Putin reiterated on Friday his claim that Kyiv's forces "stand no chance" in the sectors where fighting has intensified.

'Clear message'

Following the latest air attack, the Ukrainian Air Force said it had shot down 12 missiles including six hypersonic Kinzhal missiles.

There was no reported damage inside the city, but seven people including two children were wounded, the regional police said.

"With what happened today, it's very obvious also to the African leaders how sincere Putin is about stopping the conflict," said Peter Stano, a spokesman for EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell.

The leaders were set to travel on to the northwestern Russian city of Saint Petersburg and meet Putin.

Yet Ukrainian officials have voiced scepticism over the visit as they say no negotiations with Russia are possible.

They were quick to highlight that Russia did not cease strikes during the high-profile visit.

"Russian missiles are a message to Africa: Russia wants more war, not peace," Kuleba said.

'Arrived safely'

The delegation arrived by train after flying to Poland, where some members of Ramaphosa's security, not allowed to disembark, accused Polish authorities of racism.

The Polish government said some of those on board did not have permission to carry weapons into the country and were thus not allowed to disembark.

The South African president "arrived safely in Kyiv" along with other leaders, his spokesman Vincent Magwenya said in a video message on Twitter.

"We are now awaiting the commencement of talks with President Zelensky."

'Alleviate suffering'

Analysts however say the mediating effort could hope to win some concessions from the Kremlin ahead of a Russia-Africa summit next month.

The African continent has been badly hit by rising grain and fertiliser prices and the wider impact on global trade since Russia invaded Ukraine last year.

Magwenya said the leaders' mission "serves to seek a road to peace that will alleviate the suffering that is being experienced by people in Ukraine."

African countries have been divided over their response to the war, with some siding with Ukraine, while others have remained neutral or gravitated towards Moscow.

South Africa has drawn scrutiny as it has refused to condemn the offensive launched by Moscow.

Both Russia and Ukraine have stepped up their diplomatic initiatives with African countries divided over their response to the war, with Kuleba embarking on two diplomatic tours on the continent.

While invading Ukraine, Putin has portrayed Russia as a bulwark against the West, which he also accuses of blocking Russian exports of fertilizers.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday that Russia has seen "very dynamic development recently of our relations with African states."

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