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Ukraine Says Calls for Talks With Russia 'Uninformed or Misled'

By AFP

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Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba. **President.gov.ua**

Ukraine on Thursday criticized calls for Kyiv to hold negotiations with Russia, following media reports that its Western allies were pushing for peace talks in the wake of an underwhelming Ukrainian counteroffensive.

Nearly two years into Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the sprawling front line remains largely static as both Ukrainian and Russian forces struggle to make any breakthroughs.

"Those who argue that Ukraine should negotiate with Russia now are either uninformed or misled," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on social media.

"Or they side with Russia and want [Russian President Vladimir] Putin to take a pause before an even larger aggression," he added.

Kuleba said Kyiv had held hundreds of rounds of talks with Moscow since 2014, when

Russian-backed separatists took control of swathes of eastern Ukraine and Moscow unilaterally annexed the Crimean peninsula.

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The talks, which were mediated by Germany and France and led to a face-to-face meeting between Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Paris in 2019, failed to bring lasting peace.

Kuleba noted that none of those negotiations "prevented Putin from launching a brutal all-out invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022."

Ukrainian and Russian delegations met in the early stages of the war but Zelensky called off talks after the discovery of atrocities committed in the town of Bucha and other towns near Kyiv in spring 2022.

Zelensky said last week that Ukraine was "not ready" for talks with Russia unless Moscow's troops withdraw.

He has also refused talks as long as Putin remains in power.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Wednesday that it was "high time" for Kyiv and its Western allies "to realize that it is impossible to defeat Russia on the battlefield."

He also said dialogue was "badly needed" and that Moscow was "certainly ready to get started on it."

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