

# Zelensky Says Wants to End War by Diplomacy Next Year

By [AFP](#)

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Saturday that Kyiv would like to end the war with Russia next year through "diplomatic means," as both countries prepare for Donald Trump's return to the White House.

February 2025 would mark the third anniversary of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, with Russia's troops gaining ground in recent months against Kyiv's outmanned and outgunned soldiers.

The prospect of Trump returning to power in the United States next year has raised questions about the future of the conflict, as the Republican president-elect has been critical of U.S. military aid to Kyiv.

Meanwhile, North Korea — a key Kremlin ally — has sent thousands of its soldiers to help

Moscow repel a Ukrainian offensive ongoing in Russia's border Kursk region, according to Western officials.

Zelensky spoke a day after saying the war will end "sooner" than it otherwise would have done once Trump becomes president.

He also spoke a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin held his first phone call with a major Western leader in nearly two years, speaking to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who initiated the call despite Kyiv's objections.

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"For our part, we must do everything we can to ensure that this war ends next year. We have to end it by diplomatic means," Zelensky said in an interview with Ukrainian radio. "And this, I think, is very important."

There have been no meaningful talks between Russia and Ukraine, but Trump's re-election has plunged the attritional conflict's future into uncertainty, with the Republican repeatedly promising to cut a quick deal to end the war.

"We have to understand what the Russians want," Zelensky said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said he will only accept talks with Ukraine if Kyiv surrenders Ukrainian territory that Moscow occupies.

The Kremlin said he repeated that demand in the phone conversation with Scholz on Friday.

Zelensky has rejected Putin's conditions.

## **North Korean involvement**

With North Korea sending troops into the most significant conflict on European soil since World War II, Russia's invasion has sent shockwaves reverberating far beyond the continent.

For weeks, the West and Ukraine have warned that thousands of Pyongyang's troops were already helping Moscow's forces in the Kursk region, where Kyiv has taken swathes of Russian territory since early August.

It follows months of tightening military ties between the two former Communist allied nations, with Moscow and Pyongyang ratifying a landmark defense pact on Tuesday.

South Korea has slammed its nuclear-armed hermit neighbor's involvement, with Japan's foreign minister joining the chorus of condemnation while on a visit to Ukraine on Saturday.

"This will not only deepen the severity of the Ukraine situation but also have extremely significant implications for East Asia's security situation," Takeshi Iwaya said, pledging further support.

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Iwaya's diplomatic visit took him to Bucha, a town outside the capital where Russia's army is accused of committing horrific atrocities against civilians early in the war.

Following Russia's retreat after a month-long occupation, the bodies of dozens of civilians were found shot dead in the street, some with their hands tied behind their backs.

### **G7 by Ukraine's 'side'**

Ukraine was angered after Germany's Scholz reached out to Putin on Friday.

Berlin said Scholz "condemned Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and called on President Putin to withdraw troops."

It also said Scholz "urged Russia to show willingness to negotiate with Ukraine with the aim of achieving a just and lasting peace."

But Ukraine accused Scholz of an "attempt at appeasement" and said the call would not achieve anything other than minimize Putin's "isolation."

The chancellor — whose fragile coalition government collapsed last week — also faced blowback at home, with the conservative opposition party accusing the center-left leader of handing Putin a "propaganda win."

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Scholz said he had spoken to Zelensky before calling the Kremlin chief and also informed other Western allies of the call.

On Saturday, the G7 — which includes many of Kyiv's key backers — said Russia remained the sole obstacle to a just peace in Ukraine, pledging sanctions targeting Moscow.

"We will remain united by Ukraine's side," the Group of Seven industrialized nations said in a statement marking 1,000 days of the invasion.

Moscow has made steady advances in eastern Ukraine since this summer, inching closer to key hubs such as Pokrovsk and Kurakhove.

Zelensky said on Saturday that Russian forces were suffering heavy losses and that the advance had "slowed down" in some areas.

Ukraine was "at war with a state that does not value its people, that has a lot of equipment, that does not care how many people die," he added.

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