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Russia in Talks With Ukraine on Humanitarian Corridor for Stranded Kursk Residents

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The village of Kozachya Loknya in the Kursk region. **Alexei Dmitrashkovsky / Facebook**

Authorities in Moscow and Kyiv are in discussions about opening a humanitarian corridor for civilians stranded behind Ukrainian lines in the partially occupied Kursk region, Russia's Human Rights Commissioner Tatiana Moskalkova said Tuesday.

More than 1,500 Russian civilians are estimated to be still living in areas of the Kursk region that Ukraine's army seized in a shock cross-border offensive launched in August. The region's displaced residents and Ukraine's military say the true number is closer to 3,000.

President Volodymyr Zelensky's office said last week Thursday that it was ready to work with Moscow on opening the humanitarian corridor, but it had not yet received an official request.

The Kremlin said Monday it was "doing everything possible" to support civilians in the occupied parts of Kursk without directly addressing the Ukrainian proposal.

“We’re working closely on this issue with Ukraine [and] the International Committee of the Red Cross,” Moskalkova said as quoted by the Interfax news agency. “There’s hope for a positive solution,” she told reporters without elaborating.

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Groups of displaced Kursk region residents have accused the Russian authorities of neglect in the six months since the Ukrainian incursion. Residents have staged multiple protests, describing poor temporary accommodations and a lack of government compensation for lost and damaged property.

Ukraine has gradually lost ground to Russian troops as they try to drive Ukrainian forces out of the border region.

Kyiv argues that the territory it occupies inside Russia will be an important bargaining chip in future peace negotiations with the Kremlin, whose forces have been making steady gains across the front line in eastern Ukraine since the summer.

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