

Zelensky Slams U.S.-Russia Talks, Urges 'Fair' Negotiations

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Tuesday criticised U.S.-Russia talks for excluding Kyiv, saying efforts to end the war must be "fair" and involve European countries including Turkey.

His remarks came after Washington and Moscow said they would name teams to negotiate a path to ending the war in Ukraine, during their first high-level official talks since Russia invaded nearly three years ago.

The Ukrainian leader spoke after a nearly three-hour meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the Turkish capital Ankara.

"Ukraine, Europe in a broad sense — and this includes the European Union, Turkey, and the U.K. — should be involved in conversations and the development of the necessary security

guarantees with America regarding the fate of our part of the world," Zelensky said.

Any efforts to broker an end to the conflict should be "fair," he said, slamming the U.S.-Russia talks in Riyadh earlier on Tuesday and reiterating his opposition to "decisions without Ukraine on how to end the war in Ukraine."

He said he had not been invited to the Riyadh talks and was postponing his own trip to the Saudi capital, where he had been expected on Wednesday, pushing the date back to March 10.

Trump's overhaul of U.S. policy on Russia has triggered fears Washington could be preparing to force Kyiv into a settlement on Moscow's terms.

Those concerns were heightened by the Riyadh talks when U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov met to discuss European security and Ukraine — without any representatives from Kyiv or Brussels.

'Ideal host'

Standing beside Zelensky, Erdogan offered Turkey as the "ideal host" for any talks on ending the conflict, recalling how the sides had met in Istanbul back in 2022, just weeks after Russia invaded.

"Turkey will be an ideal host for the possible talks between Russia, Ukraine and America in the near future," he added, saying the Istanbul talks had been "an important reference point and the platform where the parties came closest to an agreement."

It was Zelensky's third visit to Turkey since the Russian invasion, with the Ukrainian leader seeking to shore up Kyiv's position following U.S. President Donald Trump's outreach towards Moscow.

NATO member Turkey has sought to maintain good relations with its warring Black Sea neighbours, with Erdogan pitching himself as a key go-between and possible peacemaker between the two.

Ankara has provided drones for Ukraine but shied away from Western-led sanctions on Moscow.

Alongside Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, Turkey has played a role in brokering several prisoner swaps between Russia and Ukraine.

Those deals have seen hundreds of prisoners returning home despite the ongoing conflict.

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