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Protesters Demand Germany Stand By Ukraine on Invasion Anniversary

By AFP

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Protesters marched through Berlin on Monday to demand Germany stand by Ukraine on the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion, a day after Germans voted in elections in which support for Kyiv was a hot topic.

Germany has played host to more than a million Ukrainian refugees since the start of the invasion and has been Ukraine's biggest source of support after the United States.

Thousands of protesters, many draped in the Ukrainian flag, marched past the Russian embassy on the way to a rally at the famed Brandenburg Gate, which was lit up in Ukraine's blue and yellow colours.

Chanting "Russia is a terror state", many held up placards condemning US President Donald Trump and his recent overtures towards his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.

Germany and Ukraine's other European allies have been blindsided by Trump's willingness to engage with Moscow over the heads of the Ukrainian government and his hostility to Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky.

Other placards held aloft by demonstrators read: "Nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine" and "No peace under Russian occupation."

'Taurus now'

Germany's support for Ukraine was a key point of debate in the campaign for the general election which took place on Sunday.

While the far-right and Moscow-friendly Alternative for Germany (AfD) doubled its vote share to more than 20 percent, first place went to the pro-Ukraine conservative CDU/CSU alliance led by likely next chancellor Friedrich Merz.

Outgoing Chancellor Olaf Scholz of the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) has also been a supporter of Ukraine but has emphasised the importance of avoiding direct conflict between Russia and NATO.

He refused to send Ukraine Taurus missiles capable of striking deep into Russian territory, something which Merz has said he wants to do.

Several signs at the Berlin protest called on Germany to deliver the weapons, including one reading simply: "Taurus now."

"Given the way the US is withdrawing its solidarity as well as the political situation in Germany, it's even more important to stand with Ukraine," 46-year-old public relations professional Katja Grote told AFP at the protest.

She said she turned out to show that the conflict was not just about Ukraine but "about the future of Europe and of all of us."

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