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Orban Urges EU to Launch Ukraine Peace Talks With Russia

By AFP

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Hungary's Viktor Orban urged the EU Saturday to open direct talks with Moscow to end the Ukraine war and vowed to oppose a bloc-wide accord on the conflict, according to a letter obtained by AFP.

The demand by the Russia-friendly Hungarian prime minister – who has repeatedly stymied European Union action in support of Kyiv – comes the day after a dramatic confrontation between U.S. President Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelensky left Ukraine's future hanging in the balance.

"I am convinced that the European Union – following the example of the United States – should enter into direct discussions with Russia on a ceasefire and a sustainable peace in Ukraine," Orban wrote to Antonio Costa, who heads the Council of the EU's 27 member states.

Details of the letter were first disclosed by the Financial Times and Hungarian investigative journalist Szabolcs Panyi, and several diplomats confirmed its authenticity to AFP.

An EU official confirmed the council had "received a letter from the Hungarian delegation," adding: "We take note of it."

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Orban has cultivated warm ties with Trump's administration and the nationalist Hungarian leader was an outlier in his reaction to Friday's dramatic scenes in Washington, which culminated with Zelensky being thrown out of the White House.

While the vast majority of European leaders rushed to assure Zelensky of their support, Orban said Trump had stood "bravely for peace" when he berated the Ukrainian president for his scepticism over Washington's outreach to Moscow.

The EU has been scrambling for a unified position since Trump sidelined both Kyiv and its European backers by launching talks directly with Russia to end the three-year war.

An extraordinary EU summit in Brussels on Thursday will discuss possible European "security guarantees" for Kyiv and seek to strike a deal on a new package of weaponry.

But Orban indicated in his letter that Hungary would not support a common EU position on either matter – as outlined in draft conclusions circulated this week among diplomats.

"It has become evident that there are strategic differences in our approach to Ukraine that cannot be bridged by drafting or communication," he wrote.

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Instead, Orban urged Costa to secure the EU's support for a United Nations Security Council resolution passed this week with support from the United States and Russia – and which avoids condemning Moscow's invasion.

Zelensky is expected to attend the Brussels meeting, days after joining European leaders and the NATO secretary general for weekend crisis talks in London.

The behaviour of Trump's team has deeply shaken European faith in Washington's commitment to protect its NATO allies.

The forthcoming meetings will focus both on supporting Ukraine and finding ways to ramp up the bloc's defences in the face of Russia.

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