

Russia Demands Ukraine Recognize Territorial Claims in Peace Talks

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A large Russian flag displayed in the occupied Ukrainian city of Mariupol. **Dmitry Yagodkin / TASS**

Russian authorities [said](#) Monday that Moscow is ready to negotiate a peace deal with Ukraine but insisted that recognition of its claims over five Ukrainian regions, including the Crimean peninsula, was "imperative" to ending the war.

"The Russian side has repeatedly signaled its readiness to begin negotiations with Ukraine without any preconditions," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told state media. "These efforts continue, which is all I can say about this issue."

Peskov [insisted](#) that Kyiv must "undertake efforts" toward resuming peace negotiations with Moscow, adding that "they [in Ukraine] have a legal ban on negotiations," referring to Zelensky's 2022 [decree](#) that rules direct talks with Russia "impossible" as long as Vladimir Putin remains president.

Since launching its full-scale invasion in February 2022, Russia has seized large parts of four Ukrainian regions and claimed them as its own, in addition to Crimea, which it annexed in

2014.

Ukraine has denounced the annexations as an illegal land grab and says it will never recognize them. European officials have warned that accepting Moscow's demands would set a dangerous precedent for future aggression.

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In an [interview](#) with the Brazilian newspaper O Globo published on Monday, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that "international recognition of Russia's ownership" of occupied Ukrainian regions and annexed Crimea was "imperative" to peace talks with Ukraine.

"We remain open to negotiations. But the ball is not in our court. So far, Kiev has not demonstrated its ability to negotiate," Lavrov told the newspaper.

U.S. President Donald Trump said earlier that he believes Zelensky is prepared to concede Crimea in a ceasefire deal with Moscow, as talks on a truce entered what Washington called a "critical" week.

But in the O Globo interview, Lavrov said that, in addition to territorial claims, Moscow is still pursuing its initial war goals of "demilitarizing" and "denazifying" Ukraine, which he cast as being ruled by a "neo-Nazi regime" under Zelensky.

"On the agenda are the tasks of demilitarizing and denazifying Ukraine, lifting sanctions, lawsuits and arrest warrants, as well as returning Russian assets that are frozen in the West," the foreign minister said.

Lavrov added that Moscow would also "seek reliable guarantees of the security of the Russian Federation against the threats posed by the hostile activities of NATO, the European Union and its individual member states on our western borders."

AFP contributed reporting.

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