

Putin Proposes Direct Russia-Ukraine Talks Next Week

By [AFP](#)

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Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday proposed holding direct talks with Ukraine in Istanbul on May 15, hours after Kyiv and European leaders called for an unconditional 30-day ceasefire to start Monday.

The leaders of Ukraine, Britain, France, Germany and Poland had in Kyiv on Saturday threatened Moscow with fresh sanctions and military support for Ukraine if Russia did not agree with the proposal.

Putin did not explicitly address that call in his statement, delivered after 1:00 a.m. in the Kremlin, instead outlining the counter-proposal for fresh Russia-Ukraine negotiations.

"We propose to the Kyiv authorities to resume the talks that they broke off in 2022, and, I emphasise, without any preconditions," Putin said.

Russian and Ukrainian negotiators held direct talks in Istanbul in the first weeks of the conflict, but failed to agree to halt the fighting, which has been raging ever since.

"We propose to start [negotiations] without delay on Thursday, May 15 in Istanbul," Putin said, adding that he would talk to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan soon to ask for his help to facilitate the talks.

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Putin said he was "committed to serious negotiations with Ukraine" and that he wanted talks to "eliminate the root causes of the conflict and to establish a long-lasting peace."

Russia's references to the "root causes" of the conflict typically refer to alleged grievances with Kyiv and the West that Moscow has put forward as justification for launching the war in February 2022.

They include pledges to "de-Nazify" Ukraine, protect Russian speakers in the country's east, push back against NATO expansion and stop Ukraine's westward geopolitical drift.

Kyiv and the West have rejected all of them, saying Russia's offensive is nothing more than an imperial-style land grab.

Tens of thousands have been killed since Russia launched the war, with millions forced to flee their homes.

"We do not exclude that during these talks we will be able to agree on some new ceasefire," Putin said.

He also accused Ukraine's Western backers of wanting to "continue war with Russia" and — without mentioning the specific Ukraine-European proposal for a 30-day ceasefire — slammed European "ultimatums" and "anti-Russian rhetoric."

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