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Ukraine Ready for Russia Truce Talks, Zelensky Says

By AFP

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Sunday said that he expects Moscow to commit to a 30-day ceasefire starting on Monday and that Kyiv was “ready” for direct talks with Russia. **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky / social media**

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Sunday he expects Moscow to commit to a 30-day ceasefire, adding that Kyiv was “ready” to meet Russia for direct truce talks.

Zelensky said so after Russia's Vladimir Putin called on Kyiv to meet in Istanbul for talks on May 15 at a nighttime press conference in the Kremlin — but did not commit to a ceasefire.

On a visit to Kyiv on Saturday the leaders of France, the U.K., Germany and Poland pressured Russia — with U.S. President Donald Trump's support — to commit to an unconditional ceasefire in Ukraine starting from Monday.

Russia's invasion has dragged on for more than three years and killed thousands of people.

“There is no point in continuing the killing even for a single day. We expect Russia to confirm a ceasefire — full, lasting and reliable — starting tomorrow, May 12, and Ukraine is ready to meet,” Zelensky said on social media.

Sounding a rare note of optimism, the Ukrainian leader likewise said he saw positive signals from Russia.

“It is a positive sign that the Russians have finally begun to consider ending the war,” Zelensky said.

“The entire world has been waiting for this for a very long time. And the very first step in truly ending any war is a ceasefire.”

Kyiv and its Western allies have argued that an unconditional ceasefire would be the only way to help find a diplomatic solution to the three-year conflict — Europe's worst since World War II.

Russia and Ukraine have not held direct talks since March 2022, shortly after the start of Moscow's invasion in February 2022.

Since the Kremlin ordered troops into Ukraine, communication channels between the two sides have only been open for exchanges of prisoners of war and the bodies of the fallen.

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Hours earlier, at a press conference held at almost 1 am (2200 GMT) in the Kremlin, Putin had responded to the Europeans' ultimatum.

“We propose to the Kyiv authorities to resume the talks that they broke off in 2022, and, I emphasize, without any preconditions,” he said.

“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 in making the talks happen.

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

But 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.”

On his return from Ukraine, French leader Emmanuel Macron accused Putin of wanting to “buy time” with his address.

U.S. President Donald Trump, however, said it was a “potentially great day for Russia and Ukraine” and vowed to work with both sides to end fighting.

Kyiv on Sunday also accused Moscow of launching more than 100 drones on Ukraine, after a

Russian-announced 72-hour ceasefire had ended at midnight on Saturday.

Kyiv had not reported any drone attacks since Thursday, when the ceasefire came into effect, although it did accuse Moscow of violating the truce hundreds of times.

Russia also accused Ukraine of not observing the ceasefire.

“On the night of May 11 [from 2:00 am on May 11], the enemy attacked with 108 Shahed attack drones and various types of imitator drones,” Kyiv's air force said, adding that it had downed 60 of them.

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