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‘Hey, Comrade Putin, Just Go’: Brazil’s Lula Urges Kremlin Leader to Join Istanbul Talks

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Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Vladimir Putin. **kremlin.ru**

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said he plans to visit Russia to personally urge President Vladimir Putin to attend peace negotiations with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Istanbul, Brazilian media reported Wednesday.

The Kremlin has yet to confirm whether Putin will participate in Thursday’s talks, which the Russian leader himself proposed as a counteroffer to Western-backed calls for a 30-day ceasefire in Ukraine. Zelensky, seemingly catching the Kremlin off guard, publicly challenged Putin to a face-to-face meeting in Istanbul.

Speaking to reporters during a visit to China, Lula said he would stop in Moscow on his way back to Brazil in an effort to press Putin to take part in negotiations.

“It costs me nothing to say, ‘Hey, comrade Putin, go to Istanbul and negotiate, come on,’”

Lula was quoted as saying by Brazil's state news agency Agencia Brasil.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said later on Wednesday that he would inform the public whether Lula and Putin plan to meet. Last week, the Brazilian president attended Russia's May 9 Victory Day parade on Red Square and held talks with Putin on expanding cooperation in nuclear energy, space and defense.

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Lula said Ukraine's foreign minister had reached out to him on Tuesday, encouraging Brazil to use its influence to help bring Putin and Zelensky to the table. That same day, Brazil and China issued a joint statement calling direct negotiations between Moscow and Kyiv "the only way to end the conflict."

The proposed negotiations in Istanbul would be the first direct talks between Russian and Ukrainian delegations since 2022, when early efforts to reach a settlement collapsed. Putin and Zelensky have not met in person since December 2019.

Putin's foreign policy aide Yury Ushakov and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov are expected to represent Russia in Istanbul, according to a former senior Kremlin official cited by The Washington Post.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and special envoys Steve Witkoff and Keith Kellogg are also expected to attend.

On Tuesday, Zelensky called on U.S. President Donald Trump, who is currently touring the Middle East, to join the talks. Trump said he may make a trip to Istanbul on Thursday "if it would be helpful."

Peskov confirmed that a Russian delegation would be present but said its members would not be disclosed until "the president deems it necessary."

AFP contributed reporting.

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