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Putin Discussed Ukraine War With Pope Leo – Kremlin

By AFP

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Pope Leo **Gregorio Borgia / AP Photo / TASS**

Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed the war in Ukraine with Pope Leo in a telephone call on Wednesday, claiming he wanted peace through diplomacy, the Kremlin said.

Putin however also claimed "the regime in Kyiv is betting on an escalation of the conflict and carrying out of acts of sabotage against civil infrastructure on Russian territory," it said in a statement.

Putin "reaffirmed his interest in bringing about peace by political and diplomatic means," the Kremlin said, describing the call as "constructive."

He did so "underlining that in order to come to a definitive, just and comprehensive settlement to the crisis, it was necessary to eliminate the deep-seated causes."

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That evoked language typically used to refer to a mix of sweeping demands regularly put forward by Russia, including limiting Ukraine's military, banning the country from joining NATO and massive territorial concessions.

Ukraine has rejected those calls and demanded an unconditional ceasefire, which Russia refuses.

Ukraine has in recent days launched a series of attacks on Russian soil, including a series of audacious strikes on warplanes parked at Russian airfields.

Russia and Ukraine on Monday swapped plans for ending their three-year war during talks in Istanbul.

Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Leo has reportedly said he is willing to host peace talks between the two countries.

Putin thanked Leo for "his willingness to contribute to a settlement" of the conflict, the Kremlin said.

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