

European Leaders To Join Zelensky in U.S. for Ukraine Talks With Trump

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August 17, 2025



European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen (R) shakes hands with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky before a meeting at the European Commission in Brussels, on August 17, 2025
Simon Wohlfahrt / AFP

European leaders will join Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky during his visit to Washington on Monday after President Donald Trump dropped his push for a ceasefire following an Alaska summit with Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

Securing a ceasefire in Ukraine had been one of Trump's core demands before the summit, to which Ukraine and its European allies were not invited.

But after the meeting yielded no breakthrough, Trump ruled out an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine — a move that would appear to favour Putin, who has long argued for negotiations on a final peace deal without a ceasefire.

Ukraine and its European allies have criticised Putin's stance as a way to buy time and build upon Russia's battlefield advances.

The leaders heading to Washington on Monday to try and bend Trump's ear on the matter include British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who is also going to the White House, said on X that she would welcome Zelensky to Brussels on Sunday for a meeting in Brussels with other European leaders joining by video.

Also heading to Washington will be Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Finnish President Alexander Stubb, who get on well with Trump.

The German government, which confirmed Merz was going, said it would try to emphasise "interest in a swift peace agreement in Ukraine."

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Trump had briefed Zelensky and European leaders on his flight back from Alaska to Washington, saying afterwards that "it was determined by all that the best way to end the horrific war between Russia and Ukraine is to go directly to a peace agreement which would end the war".

Ceasefire agreements "often times do not hold up," Trump argued on his Truth Social platform.

But Zelensky has appeared unconvinced by the change of tack, saying on Saturday that it "complicates the situation."

If Moscow lacks "the will to carry out a simple order to stop the strikes, it may take a lot of effort to get Russia to have the will to implement (something) far greater — peaceful coexistence with its neighbours for decades," he said on social media.

European leaders, for their part, have expressed unease over Trump's outreach to Putin from the outset.

During his call with Zelensky and European leaders, Trump expressed support for Putin's proposal to take full control of two eastern Ukrainian regions that Russia largely controls in exchange for freezing the frontline in two other areas, an official briefed on the talks told AFP.

Putin "de facto demands that Ukraine leave Donbas," an area consisting of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in eastern Ukraine, the source said.

In exchange, Russian forces would halt their offensive in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions in southern Ukraine, where the main cities are still under Ukrainian control.

Russia claimed in September 2022 to have annexed all four Ukrainian regions, even though its

troops still do not fully control any of them.

"The Ukrainian president refused to leave Donbas," the source said.

Trump notably also said the United States was prepared to provide Ukraine security guarantees, an assurance Merz hailed as "significant progress."

But there was a scathing assessment of the summit outcome from the European Union's top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, who accused Putin of seeking to "drag out negotiations" with no commitment to end the bloodshed.

"The harsh reality is that Russia has no intention of ending this war any time soon," Kallas said.

The diplomatic focus now switches to Zelensky's talks at the White House on Monday with the European leaders in tow.

The Ukrainian president's last Oval Office visit in February ended in an extraordinary shouting match, with Trump and Vice President JD Vance publicly berating Zelensky for not showing enough gratitude for U.S. aid.

In an interview with broadcaster Fox News after his sit-down with Putin, Trump suggested that the onus was now on Zelensky to secure a peace deal as they work towards an eventual trilateral summit with Putin.

"It's really up to President Zelensky to get it done," Trump said.

Meanwhile, the conflict in Ukraine rages on, with both Kyiv and Moscow launching attack drones at each other on Sunday.

In his post-summit statement in Alaska, Putin had warned Ukraine and European countries not to engage in any "behind-the-scenes intrigues" that could disrupt what he called "this emerging progress."

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