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Russia Says Almost 300 POWs Exchanged With Ukraine

By AFP

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A Ukrainian soldier kisses his wife after returning from captivity after a POWs exchange between Russia and Ukraine, in Chernihiv region, Ukraine, Aug. 14, 2025. **AP Photo/Evgeniy Maloletka/TASS**

Russia and Ukraine each sent back 146 prisoners of war on Sunday in the latest in a series of exchanges that has seen hundreds of POWs released this year, the two sides said.

Large-scale prisoner exchanges were the only tangible result of three rounds of talks between Russian and Ukrainian delegations in Istanbul between May and July.

They remain one of the few areas of cooperation between the two countries since Russia's offensive began in 2022.

"On Aug. 24, 146 Russian servicemen were returned from the territory controlled" by Kyiv, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Telegram.

"In exchange, 146 prisoners of war of the Ukrainian Armed Forces were transferred" to

Ukraine, it added.

Ukraine did not confirm any figures for the release.

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Russia also said that “eight citizens of the Russian Federation — residents of the Kursk region, illegally detained” by Kyiv were also returned as part of the exchange.

Ukrainian forces launched a surprise incursion into Russia's Kursk region in August last year, seizing hundreds of square kilometers of territory in a major setback for the Kremlin.

Russia deployed thousands of troops from its ally North Korea as part of a counterattack, but did not fully reclaim control of the region until April.

Among the Ukrainians released on Sunday were “two Ukrainian journalists, Dmytro Khyliuk and Mark Kaliush,” Ukraine's Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War said in a statement on Telegram.

“They were illegally detained by the occupiers in 2022 and 2023,” the statement added.

Press freedom group Reporters Without Borders (RSF) welcomed their release, saying they had been “targeted for their journalistic work.”

“RSF calls for all those responsible for their abductions and the abuse they suffered in detention to be identified and brought to justice,” RSF told AFP, adding: “The 26 Ukrainian media workers still held by the Kremlin must be released.”

Khyliuk “was kidnapped in the Kyiv region in March 2022. He is finally home in Ukraine,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on social media.

Also freed was former Kherson mayor Volodymyr Mykolayenko, “who spent more than three years in captivity,” Zelensky's aide Andriy Yermak wrote on X.

“In 2022, he was on the list for return, but Volodymyr voluntarily refused to be exchanged in favor of a seriously ill prisoner with whom he was sharing a cell in a Russian prison,” Yermak said.

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