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Russia and Ukraine Exchanging Around 1K Bodies Each Month, Red Cross Chief Says

By AFP

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The Red Cross said Thursday that it is facilitating the exchange of around 1,000 bodies each month between Russia and Ukraine, while "thousands and thousands" of dead remain unidentified.

Just back from a visit to Ukraine, International Committee of the Red Cross Director-General Pierre Krahenbuhl said he was struck by "the scale and the scope of the consequences when these military means are deployed between states."

Speaking to reporters in Geneva, he pointed out that "every month, the ICRC participates in the repatriation both ways of 1,000 bodies on average, between the Russian and the Ukrainian side."

"We are there facilitating this in our role of neutral intermediary," he said.

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The exchange of prisoners and bodies is the only concrete result of several rounds of U.S.-brokered talks between Russia and Ukraine, though exchanges had taken place even before peace negotiations began last year.

Krahenbuhl said he had visited some of the forensic institutions that ICRC supports in Ukraine, which are dealing with a "gruelling task."

"There are thousands and thousands of bodies that remain unidentified that are stored in these forensic institutions, where the staff every single day attempt ... to identify the bodies, and then to provide answers to deeply anguished families," he said.

Those, he said, are numbers "that we haven't seen in this scale in recent years in conflicts."

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