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Zelensky Confirms He Met With Russian Billionaire Abramovich in Kyiv

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Volodymyr Zelensky and Roman Abramovich. **President Of Ukraine / flickr; Sergei Kiselev / Moskva News Agency**

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has confirmed that he held a private meeting in Kyiv last month with Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich, using the backchannel to notify President Vladimir Putin that Ukraine will never surrender its eastern Donbas region.

The acknowledgment comes days after Putin said a Russian businessman had approached him, telling the president Zelensky had invited him to travel to Ukraine. The Russian leader publicly dismissed the overture, stating he saw "no point" in talks while Russian forces continue to advance.

In an interview with Sky News broadcast on Sunday evening, Zelensky clarified that the meeting was "not a secret," though Abramovich had initially requested that his mediation role remain entirely quiet.

According to Zelensky, the billionaire traveled to the Ukrainian capital to gauge what Kyiv was

“ready to do” to initiate peace talks.

“I said to [Abramovich] about Donbas, and it was the key message. I said we will not leave and we will not go out from our territory,” Zelensky said. “No, we will not give you a victory in such a way. And you will not get it.”

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Putin has repeatedly said that any end to the war depends on Ukraine ceding the industrial Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which together form the Donbas.

Zelensky added that any potential compromises could only be discussed following a comprehensive ceasefire. During the meeting, the Ukrainian leader also reiterated his willingness to meet Putin face-to-face in a neutral setting, suggesting formats that could include either U.S. President Donald Trump or European leaders.

Abramovich, the former owner of Chelsea FC who remains under Western sanctions, previously served as a key mediator during the failed peace talks in the opening weeks of Russia’s 2022 invasion.

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