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Putin Tells Ukrainians to ‘Come Over to Our Side’ Despite War

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REUTERS / Anastasia Barashkova

President Vladimir Putin urged Ukrainians to unite with Russia on what he called “the right side of history” despite “whatever tragedies are happening today,” as the Russian invasion of Ukraine marches toward the start of its sixth year.

“I’d like to say: come over to our side because it’s our common side... the right side of history,” Putin told Serbian filmmaker Emir Kusturica, according to the state-run news agency TASS.

The Russian leader stressed that he was not necessarily referring to merging into a “single state,” but “unification in the broadest sense of the word” in order to achieve “common goals.” He did not clarify what he meant.

Putin has repeatedly promoted narratives of historical unity between Russians and Ukrainians since launching the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. His remarks come amid ongoing Russian missile and drone attacks on Ukrainian cities and infrastructure, as well as

mounting casualties on both sides.

UN data estimates that nearly 18,000 Ukrainian civilians have been confirmed killed and almost 58,000 wounded since February 2022. Since the start of 2026, nearly 600 Russian civilians were estimated to have been killed in Ukrainian attacks, according to Conflict Intelligence Team, an independent war monitoring group.

In his remarks, Putin again blamed Ukraine's Western allies for pursuing a "divide and rule" strategy to "weaken, dismember, break down" and "subjugate" Moscow and Kyiv.

Putin's comments were part of Kusturica's documentary marking the 80th birthday of Russian Orthodox Church head Patriarch Kirill.

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