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Ukraine President Zelensky Calls For Meeting With Putin 'To End The War'

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday called again for a meeting with Russian leader Vladimir Putin in an effort to "put an end to the war".

World | [Agence France-Presse](#) | Updated: April 24, 2022 7:01 pm IST

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Kyiv: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday called again for a meeting with Russian leader Vladimir Putin in an effort to "put an end to the war".

"I think that whoever started this war will be able to end it," he told a news conference at a metro station in the heart of the Ukrainian capital.

He was "not afraid to meet" Putin if it would lead to a peace deal between Russia and Ukraine, he added.

"From the beginning, I have insisted on talks with the Russian president," said Zelensky.

"It's not that I want (to meet him), it's that I have to meet him so as to settle this conflict by diplomatic means. We have confidence in our partners, but we have no confidence in Russia," he added.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will visit Kyiv Sunday, the day the Russian invasion of Ukraine enters its third month, President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin would also visit, he told reporters. It will be the first official visit by US government officials since the February 24 invasion.

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A US State Department official declined to comment.



Seeking deal for Mariupol soldiers

Zelensky denounced plans by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to visit Moscow on Tuesday, before Kyiv.

"It is simply wrong to go first to Russia and then to Ukraine," justice and no logic in this order."

Zelensky repeated his warning that they would break off talks with remaining Ukrainian soldiers in the besieged Black Sea port of Mariupol.

"If our men are killed in Mariupol and if these pseudo-referendums are organised in the (southern) region of Kherson, then Ukraine will withdraw from any negotiation process," he said.

He was ready to exchange Ukraine's soldiers defending the city "in whatever format" to save "these people who find themselves in a horrible situation, surrounded".

Ukrainian officials earlier Saturday accused Russia of thwarting a fresh attempt to evacuate civilians from Mariupol

Zelensky said that "today is one of the hardest days" since the start of the Russian siege of the city at the beginning of March.

Zelensky also said eight people had been killed and 18 wounded in Russian strikes on the Black Sea port of Odessa, updating an earlier toll given by local officials.

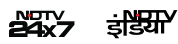
The Odessa and Mariupol deaths all but buried hopes of a truce for Orthodox Easter.

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