🖤 ISTANBUL PEACE TALKS: RUSSIA & UKRAINE REMAIN WORLDS APART

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Summary

The first direct peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine since the early phase of Russia's 2022 invasion revealed just how far apart the two sides remain. While there were no breakthroughs, the meeting in Istanbul produced some signs of progress, including a mutual agreement for a major prisoner exchange and future talks. However, deep disagreements—especially regarding territorial demands—continue to stall any real progress toward a ceasefire.



Ialks in Istanbul: A New Opening?

On Friday, Russia and Ukraine held in-person talks for the first time in years. The historic meeting took place in Istanbul, chaired by Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, and lasted just under two hours.

Ukraine's delegation was led by its defence minister, while Russia sent Kremlin aide Vladimir Medinsky. Although no deal was struck, the fact that the two parties met face-to-face is considered a meaningful step toward diplomacy.

<u>A Russia's Demands Called 'Unacceptable.'</u>

Despite the diplomatic setting, negotiations hit a familiar wall. According to sources close to the talks, Russia insisted that Ukraine cede territory still under Kyiv's control—a demand Kyiv and its Western allies have firmly rejected.

Leaders from the UK, France, Germany, and Poland immediately condemned Russia's position as "unacceptable."

C Prisoner Swap Reached

Amid tensions, there was one key area of agreement: both countries agreed to a large-scale **prisoner exchange** that would see **1,000 detainees from each side released**. The move is being hailed as a small but significant humanitarian breakthrough.

& Leaders Brief Trump After Talks

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, attending a European summit in Albania, spoke with U.S. President Donald Trump after the Istanbul talks. Joined by leaders of France, Germany, the UK, and Poland, Zelensky emphasized that international

pressure on Russia must continue until Moscow shows genuine intent to end the war.

Trump responded by saying he believes he *"can make a deal"* with Russian President Vladimir Putin, hinting at potential U.S. diplomatic involvement in the future.

What's Next?

Both parties have agreed to **prepare their visions for a possible ceasefire** and reconvene for additional talks. While no date has been confirmed, analysts see this as a cautious but positive step forward.

"Direct contact between the two sides is an important development," said Peter Slezkine of the Stimson Center. "It keeps the door open for diplomacy."

🔄 Final Word

Despite signs of movement, the road to peace remains long and uncertain. With no clear consensus on territorial disputes and little trust between the parties, the coming weeks will be critical in determining whether diplomacy can finally take root—or falter once again.

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