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## It's all up to Russia to end killing in Ukraine

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**Vasyl  
Myroshnychenko**

**A**fter three years of death and devastation, including the lost lives of thousands of innocent Ukrainian civilians, there is some hope about Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine.

Following productive negotiations with the United States in Saudi Arabia, Ukraine has agreed to a positive and practical proposal for a 30-day interim ceasefire.

Such a ceasefire, if agreed to by Vladimir Putin's Russian Federation, provides the chance to build confidence through significant humanitarian initiatives.

That includes the exchange of both military and civilian prisoners and detainees, and the return of Ukrainian children who have been forcibly transferred to Russia.

Please believe me that no one wants peace more than the Ukrainian people. Since the first day of the war in 2014, and throughout Ukraine's brave defence of our democracy and sovereignty, peace has always been our goal.

We now want to do everything to achieve it as soon as possible and in a reliable way – so that the war does not return.

That is why we support the offer of a ceasefire as progress toward peace. That is why we will not be an obstacle to peace, but a partner in restoring it, be that with the United States, our rallying partners in Europe, or our great mate, Australia, whose support we are

forever thankful for. We are also grateful that the United States immediately lifted a pause on military aid and intelligence sharing – both of which practically protect lives.

The ball is now completely on the side of Vladimir Putin.

As per the deal developed by the US, the ceasefire will only start if accepted and concurrently implemented by the Kremlin. In line with President Donald J. Trump's fierce focus on getting a result, the proposal will now be put to Putin by the American side – it is now solely up to Putin to agree.

Putin's answer to this peaceful proposal will be seen by the whole world. In turn, it will be clear to the whole world as to who wants peace and who does not.

Frankly, beyond a ceasefire, Putin could end the war tomorrow through a simple step: withdrawing his illegal invading force.

Rather than the utterly false narrative about NATO aggression, Putin has directly said that he invaded Ukraine because he wants to fulfil Russia's imperial mission, which means the subjugation of non-Russian neighbours.

Indeed, for us, this war has never been about land per se, but about our people.

Twenty-thousand kids have been taken from the areas of Ukraine that are occupied by the Russian military – they need to come home to their families.

There is no freedom for millions of people who are forced to deny their

own culture and religion – they deserve those rights. Thousands are imprisoned or detained – people should not have to live with repression.

All Ukrainians are asking for is a future. A future where our citizens can again live on our sovereign territory with a democratically elected government.

A future where they can continue to speak the languages and practice the religions of their choosing. A future where people can return to the normal aspects of life like taking their kids to football practice, planning a beach holiday, or getting together with their families by the Dnipro River.

We truly hope that, if agreed to, a ceasefire will be an important first step towards such a fair and stable future.

To have a just and lasting peace, it is likely that Ukraine will further need the help of its friends, possibly as peacekeepers.

The recent pledges from around the world to support Ukraine this way, and through other security guarantees, have been overwhelming, and show that our stand for democracy is the stand of many around the globe.

In this respect, I again take the opportunity to thank Prime Minister Anthony Albanese for expressing his willingness to consider Australian participation in peacekeeping in some form, if that situation were to arise, as well as for the \$1.5 billion in aid given by Australia to date.

I'm optimistic that the Coalition will continue its record of commit-



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ment to Ukraine as well.

Between meetings, I recently jumped into a cafe to grab a takeaway coffee.

The owner saw the Ukrainian flag on my lapel and expressed his support, as so many of you do. I thanked him and we got to talking.

He asked: how will the war end? My answer: when the killing stops.

A ceasefire built on international co-operation is needed to get to that goal. We now have the proposal. We await Vladimir Putin's response.

**Vasyl Myroshnychenko is Ukraine's ambassador to Australia and New Zealand**



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