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US insists that Kiev 'get out of Donbass' – Zelensky

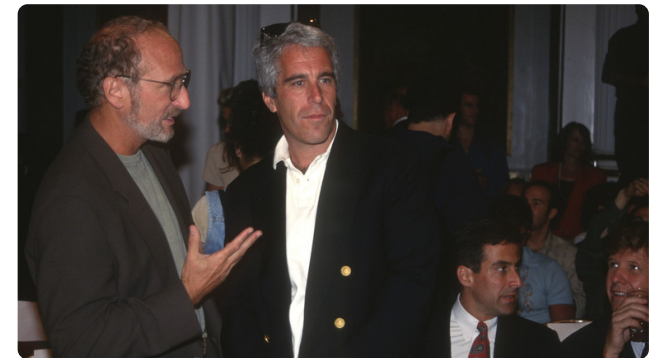
Donald Trump earlier pressed the Ukrainian leader to hold elections and “come to the table fast”



Vladimir Zelensky. © Charles McQuillan/Getty Images

Both Moscow and Washington insist that Kiev's withdrawal from Russia's Donbass is a condition for ending the conflict, Ukraine's Vladimir Zelensky has said. US President Donald Trump earlier urged Kiev to “*come to the table fast,*” accusing Ukraine of dragging out the

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settlement process.

In an interview with AFP on Friday, Zelensky confirmed that *“both the Americans and the Russians say that if you want the war to end tomorrow, get out of Donbass.”*

Despite gradually losing ground to Moscow, Zelensky rejected suggestions that Ukraine is on the brink of defeat. *“You can’t say that we’re losing the war... The question is whether we will win. That is the question – but it’s a very costly question.”*

Trump has made no secret of his growing impatience with Kiev. Earlier this month, he said, *“Ukraine better come to the table fast.”* In separate remarks, he stated that *“Russia wants to make a deal and Zelensky is going to have to get moving,”* adding that Russian President Vladimir Putin is *“ready to make a deal... [though] Ukraine is less ready.”*

Zelensky – who has consistently ruled out territorial concessions – pushed back, telling Axios that the US approach is not fair.

The Ukrainian leader – whose presidential term expired in 2024 and was labeled by Russia as *“illegitimate”* – also reiterated his reluctance to hold elections. *“No one wants elections during a war. Everyone is afraid of its destructive effect,”* he said, claiming that *“the Russians just want to replace me.”*

Zelensky previously agreed to hold elections following US pressure, but

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demanded security guarantees from the West.

Zelensky's interview followed a new round of Russia-US-Ukraine talks in Geneva. Prior to the negotiations, Moscow said they would revolve around the issue of territory.

Russia has insisted that a sustainable settlement will only be possible if Ukraine withdraws from the areas still under its control in Donbass – which voted to join Russia in 2022 – and commits to neutrality, demilitarization, and denazification. Russia has also demanded that Ukraine recognize its new borders.

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 **Mi Samsung** 2/21/2026 at 6:03 PM 0

I must agree with LOL-Z, "You can't say that we're losing the war..." Of course not you've already LOST the war but as long as the gravy train of support comes from the west you are quite happy to throw Ukrainian conscripts into the Russian front.

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 **Mark Tiller** 2/21/2026 at 5:57 PM 0

The Russian leadership's friends (Dmitriev, Ushakov) of the Trump gang want the Kiev regime to leave the Donbass voluntarily so to be a part of a Trump brokered minsk type deal that will soften domestic criticism of the sellout. The Russian leadership will not order their military to step on the gas and finish off the US puppet Kiev regime. Almost a non starter.

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 **Joël Pichette** 2/21/2026 at 5:45 PM 0

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 **Mr H0wler** 2/21/2026 at 2:05 PM 5

If Zelensky was to lead a charge against a Russian line, would he be shot more times from the front or from the back?

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 **candy mills** 2/21/2026 at 2:27 PM 0

Or on top of the head with a drone bomblet.

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 **Fred Kreyen** 2/21/2026 at 3:43 PM 1

fair change men will hang him....

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 **xaver pan** 2/21/2026 at 5:12 PM 0

Or bring him back to his former career – a TV comedian.


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 **Dominic** 2/21/2026 at 5:32 PM 0

having seen his act I'm not sure that's a thing now.

although his memorable line that I do remember is – 'a message to my european friends, send hitlers book we are sold out.'

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 **Dominic** 2/21/2026 at 5:30 PM 0

all four regions are lost already, the only debate is how long and whether Odessa