

Ukraine, Russia begin largest Prisoner swap of the war



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In the largest prisoner exchange since the war began, Ukraine and Russia have begun a multi-day operation to swap nearly 2,000 detainees 1,000 from each side marking a rare but significant humanitarian development in the ongoing conflict.

The exchange started on Friday, with Kyiv confirming that 390 Ukrainian prisoners had returned home. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced on X, “We are bringing our people

home.” Meanwhile, Russia’s Defense Ministry reported that 270 servicemen and 120 civilians were received from Ukraine.

The agreement, finalized during a meeting in Istanbul last week, stands as the only concrete outcome of direct talks between Ukrainian and Russian officials their first face-to-face negotiation since Russia’s full-scale invasion began in February 2022.

The Istanbul talks were initiated following a ceasefire-or-sanctions ultimatum issued by European allies to Moscow. Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed the meeting, widely viewed as an effort to stall pressure rather than pursue genuine peace. While Kyiv demanded an immediate ceasefire and direct talks between Zelensky and Putin, neither occurred.

Unusually, former U.S. President Donald Trump disclosed the ongoing swap on social media before its official confirmation breaking a norm of secrecy until after such exchanges are completed.

According to Ukraine’s Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, this is the 64th exchange since the invasion, with more than 4,750 Ukrainian citizens having been freed since March 2022. The department said a previous exchange on May 7 returned over 200 Ukrainian service members, marking the fifth such event in 2025 alone.

Although the prisoner release brings relief to many families, it remains the only tangible result of

the recent high-level diplomacy in Istanbul.