President Volodymyr Zelensky open letter to President Vladimir Putin

Kyiv • 4 June 2026

Open Letter

To the President of the Russian Federation

From the President of Ukraine

When you came to power in Russia more than 26 years ago, many people in Ukraine viewed you positively. That is how it was. But that is now in the past.

Now, the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians view it positively that our long-range drones paid a visit to the opening of your forum in St. Petersburg, covering a distance of more than 1,000 kilometers. As you know very well, that distance is not the limit of our capabilities.

For 26 years, your time in power has completely changed the agenda of relations between Ukraine and Russia. From discussions about trade and other civilian matters, our nations have moved to talking almost exclusively about strikes and losses.

You have spent nearly half of your 26 years in power in Russia waging war against Ukraine.

Whatever you may say about NATO, geopolitics, or the Russian language, this war is your personal choice — a war without a real cause. That is how history will remember it.

Those years could have been very different.

We often hear that you are comfortable with this war. Of course, not in those cases when it comes to the security of your residence in Valdai or your parade in Moscow. Your own life is valuable to you.

But now we can all see that Russians are finally becoming less comfortable with this reality — with the fact that the war is bringing more and more negative consequences to Russia.

They do not like our drones and missiles.

[Transcribed from original by the Parley Policy Institute]

They do not like gasoline shortages and constantly rising prices.

They do not like constant restrictions.

They do not like your intention to launch a second wave of mobilization in order to expand the war into another direction in Ukraine or to use it against other countries neighboring Russia.

They do not like the fact that there is no end in sight to your war.

Yes, you can still force Russians to exist this way. But your resources are shrinking significantly.

You will not have enough money or political capital to keep buying the loyalty of Russians the way you have for the past 26 years.

And we will do everything we can to ensure that the world helps bring that moment closer.

As you yourself like to say, “we need to run the numbers.”

Yesterday, I received a report on the losses of your army on the front in Ukraine during May. Once again, the number exceeded 30,000 Russian soldiers killed and seriously wounded. We have been maintaining that level month after month, and we have video confirmation of every one of your losses — these are not empty claims.

We know that 63 percent of your battlefield losses are killed, while only 37 percent are wounded. In the 21st century, no army can afford such a ratio. And the share of those killed will continue to grow.

It is not as if we in Ukraine are concerned about the fate of Russian soldiers after everything your war has brought to our country.

But I do care about Ukrainians.

We are losing our people, and every loss is painful to us. Even when the ratio of Ukrainian losses to Russian losses is one to five or one to six, it still matters greatly.

It also matters that you regularly postpone, every few months, your own deadlines for capturing our regions — especially the Donetsk region. And you will not capture it this year either.

But we in Ukraine do not want a permanent war. We know very well that life without war is infinitely better. And we want to achieve that.

[Transcribed from original by the Parley Policy Institute]

I am convinced that the majority of Russians would respond positively to this as well — and you know it.

Many did not believe that Ukraine would be able to hold out for so long. You did not believe it. And those who advised you did not believe it either. That was a mistake.

You did not expect full-scale resistance from Ukraine, and you did not foresee that things would go this far. Yet here we all are — in the fifth year of this full-scale war.

Do not be afraid to take the path out of this war. That is the main thing that is required of you now.

Ukraine has preserved its independence. And it will preserve it. Despite all predictions to the contrary.

We have united many around the world to stand with Ukraine and against you. We found the weapons and the financing we needed.

We receive support. You receive sanctions. And this will continue until there is justice for Ukraine — the justice we seek and the justice that can be achieved.

We will not allow those who are trying to convince you that sanctions against Russia will be significantly eased, and that support for Ukraine will be significantly reduced, without any meaningful change in your position toward Ukraine, to succeed. The example of Orban shows how those who choose to help Russia in its war against us end in disgrace.

Ukraine has endured harsh winters while you tried to destroy our energy system. We held firm — and even in darkness, the resilience of Ukrainians remained intact.

We brought the war onto your territory, and you would not have been able to cope with it without North Korea's help. You are the first ruler of Russia to turn to Pyongyang for assistance.

And today you are fully dependent on China — also for the first time in Russia's history.

You believed Ukrainians would not have the strength to defend themselves. Yet today, our people are helping our partners in the Middle East and the Gulf build their own defenses.

You hoped for internal unrest in Ukraine. Instead, it was your own military formations that staged a mutiny against you. June 23 will mark another anniversary of that event, and silence will not erase this fact from history.

[Transcribed from original by the Parley Policy Institute]

And now it is you whom your own officials, businessmen, and propagandists look at with obvious fatigue. The world can see it.

The world has not grown tired of Ukraine, as you long hoped it would. But there is growing fatigue with Russia — even among those in the wider world who help you bypass sanctions and keep your economy afloat.

You cannot fail to notice it. After 26 years in power, age is beginning to take its toll. And with time, the fatigue with you will only grow.

We have seen intelligence reports showing that you are now considering plans to continue the war into 2027 and 2028. We also know that you hope ballistic missiles will achieve for you what everything else has failed to achieve. You want to draw Belarus even deeper into this war, and we are now forced to prepare for that as well. We see that you are trying to orchestrate something around Transnistria. Your propagandists threaten, in one way or another, every country neighboring Russia. Do you really want to go through all of this?

The choice is yours now.

Enough of war.

Ukraine proposes to end this war.

This must be done honestly, with dignity, and with guarantees that the war will not be reignited.

We see that the United States is fully focused on the issue of Iran, and it would be wrong to simply wait until the war in Europe returns to the center of its attention.

Ukraine proposes ending this war through direct engagement between us — and you.

I am proposing a meeting.

Everyone heard your representatives, smiling, say that I could supposedly come to Moscow. But after these 26 years, there is nothing for a Ukrainian leader to do in your capital — just as there is nothing for a Russian leader to do in Kyiv.

There are countries that have traditionally hosted leaders to resolve issues of war and peace. Switzerland, Türkiye, the countries of the Arab world — many are able and willing to host such a meeting.

It is leaders who resolve the key issues. That has always been the case, and it always will be.

[Transcribed from original by the Parley Policy Institute]

I propose to set a clear date for such a meeting.

We have heard that you were promised in Alaska the resolution of certain issues concerning Ukraine and Europe. But you can see for yourself that Ukrainian and European issues are not decided in Anchorage.

Other agreed participants could join the bilateral track to be established between us.

Since the war is taking place in Europe, and since Ukraine needs security guarantees, while you also seek security guarantees for yourself, it would be logical to involve those who can genuinely serve as guarantors.

We believe Europe should be part of this process — those who truly have the capacity to influence the situation.

We also believe that the United States must be part of the process. This is what could help shape a new security architecture for our part of the world.

We've already experienced many agreements with Russia, including the Minsk agreements, that ultimately failed. That is why we must first find direct answers between us to the questions that remain, and not hide from difficult issues behind formulas, technical working groups, or endless time lost in shuttle diplomacy.

Your war has permanently set Ukraine and Russia apart.

The front line today is the line from which diplomacy must begin.

Ukraine is ready for a full ceasefire for the duration of the negotiations. This is standard practice, and current developments around Iran only reinforce that point. An attempt to establish real silence is the best way to begin talking to one another. We believe it would not simply be an attempt, but a real ceasefire — if that is what you want.

You know that the United States has the capability to monitor a ceasefire along the line where hostilities stop.

Ukraine is ready for an all-for-all exchange of prisoners of war, and this could become a good prologue to ending the war.

Serious steps must be taken to return civilians and children who were taken away during the war.

We must determine what kind of future awaits the generations of Ukrainians and Russians who will come after us.

[Transcribed from original by the Parley Policy Institute]

If you do not personally come to the conclusion that it is time to end this war, Ukraine will continue fighting for its existence. We will have those who support us.

But you, too, will have to fight much harder for your own existence — not Russia's, but your own. And this is not a threat from me or from Ukraine. It is a fact of Russian history that you know well: when Russia grows tired, change comes.

We can work toward that fatigue.

You can stop your war.

Eternal memory to all those whose lives were taken by this war.

Glory to Ukraine!

[Transcribed from original by the Parley Policy Institute]