

WAR IN UKRAINE

Wartime election would 'destroy' Ukraine, Zelenskyy says

Mykhailo Fedorov, a popular minister credited with modernizing Ukraine's armed forces, called for fresh elections in a challenge to Volodymyr Zelenskyy after his dismissal.



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By Reuters and The Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine – Holding a wartime election in Ukraine while active fighting with Russia continues would “destroy” the country by splitting Ukrainians, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said.

His comments, released to reporters on Sunday, were Zelenskyy's first on the subject since ousted [former Defence Minister Mykhailo Fedorov](#) called for a wartime poll in a bombshell address last week.

Fedorov's surprise dismissal last month sparked widespread protests, but supporters calling for his reinstatement later balked at his call for an election - the first such demand by a major Ukrainian political figure since Russia launched its full-scale invasion in 2022.

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Elections in war are prohibited by Ukrainian law. Analysts also say security concerns and the millions of Ukrainians abroad, under Russian occupation or fighting at the front mean it would be too difficult to hold an election.

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Elections would split Ukraine, Zelenskyy says

Zelenskyy's approval rating has remained generally stable at about 60%, but pollsters have said that while Ukrainians want fresh faces in politics, many have little appetite for voting now.

An August 5 poll by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology found that 57% of Ukrainians want elections only after fighting ends.

Echoing his previous comments on the matter, Zelenskiy said a wartime election might be possible if Kyiv's partners could guarantee security, but that no one has proposed such a plan.

"Elections right now are a tsunami for the state, which will split Ukraine," he said.

“That’s why my strategy is to steer the country toward an ending of the war and to preserve an independent and sovereign state.”

Fedorov, a longtime Zelenskyy ally who has been seen as a top political challenger, did not explicitly say whether he would stand in any future election.

Zelenskyy says minister was misguided

In his wide-ranging comments, Zelenskyy said he believes some actions taken by Fedorov were misguided, as he publicly detailed their dispute for the first time.

“I really had and still have a very positive attitude toward Mykhailo. We have been through a lot together. But I believe that he himself goes, or is pushed, into the wrong things,” he said.

Zelenskyy said he had offered Fedorov four different options to continue working in government. Fedorov, he said, rejected all four proposals.

He appeared to link Fedorov to an awkward episode involving [Starlink and Elon Musk](#). Zelenskyy said that earlier this year the Defense Ministry had told him that SpaceX had agreed to allow Ukraine to use Starlink over Russian territory to carry out deep strike operations, subject to political approval.

Acting on that, Zelenskyy said, he raised the issue directly with U.S. President Donald Trump. He told Trump that Musk had confirmed the proposed use. Zelenskyy said the two sides subsequently sought Musk’s confirmation and discussed financing for the project.

But at a later meeting, Zelenskyy said Trump told him that Musk had rejected the proposal and accused him of having misled the U.S. president. Musk considered the move a dangerous escalation, according to Zelenskyy.





— Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, on August 22 in Kyiv.

Thomas Trutschel / Photothek via Getty Images

“He said that I had supposedly deceived him because Musk had denied Ukraine the use of Starlink on Russian territory. I went back to our Ministry of Defense and they said that maybe it was so,” he said.

Zelenskyy did not explicitly accuse Fedorov of lying. He said this episode was among the reasons behind “some of the steps.”

Zelenskyy also pushed back against protesters’ vilification of [former army chief Oleksandr Syrskiy](#), whom he dismissed, and current Defense Minister Maj. Gen. Yevhen Khmara, saying they had gone too far.

“Maybe someone doesn’t like Syrskiy for one reason or another. But the slogans ‘Syrskiy is the devil, Khmara is the devil,’ ... this is too much,” he said. “In principle, you can’t treat the military like this and tolerate it, especially when it was the military that made it possible for any peaceful protests to take place in the Ukrainian capital at all.”

Pressure on defense budget but military successes

The president also described severe financial pressure on Ukraine’s defense effort. He said the Defense Ministry faced a \$27 billion budget shortfall after spending decisions earlier in the year brought forward funds originally intended for the second half of 2026.

Touching on a corruption probe that led Zelenskyy to fire one of his most senior officials this

week, he said anti-corruption investigators do not believe the president was involved. The investigators had named a deputy head of the presidential office among the suspects in a money-laundering case.

“The heads of anti-corruption agencies have zero questions for me. They understand perfectly well that I am not involved in anything like that. And this is important to me,” he said.

On the battlefield, Zelenskyy was optimistic, saying Ukraine had almost completely regained control of the Dnipropetrovsk region, with only about 10 square kilometers and three small villages remaining outside Ukrainian control.

Russian strikes on Ukraine's capital kills at least 12

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He said another operation was underway elsewhere and that its results were expected by the end of August.

He also predicted that by the end of 2026 Ukraine could reach parity between the territory occupied by Russia since the beginning of the year and the territory retaken by Ukrainian forces. Zelenskyy said Russia had occupied about 990 square kilometers since the start of the year, while Ukraine had restored control over roughly 820 square kilometers.

The president said Russia's principal objective remained the Konstantynivka-Sloviansk-Kramatorsk axis and that Moscow was still demanding Ukraine withdraw from the Donbas region as a condition for a settlement.

Still struggling for access to Patriot missiles

Zelenskyy said Ukraine was receiving substantially fewer [Patriot interceptor missiles](#) even as Russian ballistic attacks are increasing.

He said Ukraine received 675 Patriot missiles in 2023, compared with 364 in 2025 and an expected 264 in 2026. Zelenskyy said he wanted to secure 300 additional Patriot missiles for the coming winter, while Ukraine's Air Force had requested 360.

The shortfall is particularly serious because the United States and European partners are struggling to expand production. Zelenskyy said he hoped Ukraine could obtain even 5% or 10% of U.S. reserves and was able to pay for them.

Zelenskyy said Russia could eventually produce up to 1,300 ballistic missiles a year, compared with an estimated current capacity of 600.

He said Ukraine was also preparing alternatives to Starlink, including a European communications project, as Russia and China work on their own competing system.



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