



## Putin Warns Macron “Large-Scale Catastrophe” Looms At Ukraine Nuclear Plant

### Description

**RUSSIA/FRENCH:** French President Emmanuel Macron and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin held a phone call Friday where the focus was ensuring the avoidance of disaster at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in southern Ukraine. For weeks the site has emerged as the single most concerning hotspot in the conflict, given the possibility of nuclear accident.

Over the past week tit-for-tat accusations between Russian and Ukrainian forces have intensified amid warnings of “another Chernobyl” if the standoff doesn’t deescalate. Russia, which has about 500 of its troops occupying the nuclear power plant, the largest in Europe, has blamed Ukrainian forces for repeat shelling of the sensitive facility.

Putin in Friday’s call warned Macron about the potential for “**large-scale catastrophe**” at the plant, blaming Kiev for the continued shelling and the deterioration of safe operations.



*The two leaders have talked dozens of times since the war began. AFP via Getty Images*

According to the call readout from the Kremlin side via Reuters:

*Putin said shelling of the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in southern Ukraine, which he blamed on Kyiv, created the risk of “large-scale catastrophe”. Both presidents **agree on the need to send a team from the International Atomic Energy Agency to the plant.***

*According to the Kremlin, Putin told Macron about continuing obstacles to supplying Russian food and fertilizer products to world markets.*

The day prior, IAEA chief Rafael Grossi said he’s ready to lead an inspection team there, after an urgent call the inspect the complex was issued by Thursday’s trilateral meeting of President Zelensky, Turkey’s Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Secretary-General António Guterres in Lviv, Ukraine.

Ukraine for its part has charged Russian forces with using the plant which supplies broad swathes of Europe with power as “**nuclear blackmail**”. But following the Macron call, **Putin confirmed readiness to facilitate an urgent IAEA mission.**

Zelensky has stated outright that anything that happens there will automatically be viewed as Moscow’s fault. He also in Saturday statements indicated his forces won’t stop attempting to liberate it from Russian troops:

“Every Russian soldier who either shoots at the plant, or shoots using the plant as cover, must understand that he becomes a special target for our intelligence agents, for our special services, for our army,” Zelenskiy said in a video address on Saturday night.

It's clear that the plant has **already been hit and partially damaged by shelling** this month. Concern for potential contamination has raised such that international monitors have begun modeling various disaster scenarios:

In case a nuclear disaster at Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant occurred on Aug 15-18, this is how the released airborne radioactive contaminants would probably get dispersed – Ukrainian hydrometeorological institute [pic.twitter.com/1dQLcCtt1u](https://pic.twitter.com/1dQLcCtt1u)

— Myroslava Petsa (@myroslavapetsa) [August 18, 2022](#)

Bloomberg has given the latest damage update Friday as follows: **“Already only two of six reactors at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant are operating**, potentially leaving Ukraine’s electricity grid **facing collapse this winter**, with the crisis spilling into neighboring European Union energy markets.”

“Europe’s biggest atomic-energy station, Zaporizhzhia has in recent weeks been hit by shelling, with Ukraine and Russia blaming each other,” the report continues. “Explosions wrecked infrastructure and cables critical for cooling atomic reactions and transmitting power.”

The Kremlin has meanwhile alleged that Ukraine is planning a “false flag provocation” at Zaporizhzhia, even specifying something is being planned for Friday. There are unconfirmed reports being circulated that the Russian military even told local plant workers who are keeping it running to stay home Friday.

by Tyler Durden

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