

Most African Countries Support Russia: Zelensky's Failed Meeting with African Leaders. Only Four Showed Up

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Apparently, Volodymyr Zelensky's popularity in Ukraine is very low. The Ukrainian leader called for a virtual diplomatic meeting with African heads of state, but the event failed completely. Almost all African leaders declined to participate, hampering Zelensky's plans to make the meeting a pro-Kiev propaganda stage. Meanwhile, the Russian government's popularity is growing in Africa, where citizens take the streets in support for the special military operation in Ukraine and ask for Russian help in combating terrorism.

On June 20, the Ukrainian president met with representatives of the African Union in order to discuss matters concerning the current conflict situation in Eastern Europe and the role of Africa on the world arena. Of the fifty-five heads of state invited to the meeting, only four attended. The other countries sent only diplomats or ministers, with the heads of state and government not willing to attend, even with the meeting being virtual.

The heads of state who attended the meeting were Macky Sall of Senegal, Alassane Ouattara of Côte d'Ivoire, Mohammed el-Menfi, President of the Libyan Council, and Denis Sassou Nguesso of Congo. It is important to note that Sall is the current president of the African Union, which is why his presence was essential for the event to take place. Therefore, his attendance does not necessarily mean an expression of his real desire – even more considering his recent conversations with Russian President Vladimir Putin and the effort to increase Russia-Africa cooperation.

The virtual meeting was operated in secret, behind closed doors. According to official sources, Zelensky reiterated the Ukrainian position on the conflict, calling the Russian operation an unjustified “aggression”. He also commented on the current food crisis affecting Africa as a result of the conflict's impact on the grain market. According to Zelensky, the African continent is Russia's “hostage” because food shortages would be the

result of such “aggression” and would only end when Russia decided to retreat.

Commenting on the event, Macky Sall took the most neutral and impartial stance possible, demonstrating that the Africa Union did not adhere to Zelensky’s appeals, but was concerned only with African states’ interests and the proper functioning of international law.

“Africa remains committed to respecting the rules of international law, the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the freedom of trade”, he said in a publication in his Twitter account.

It is interesting to note how Zelensky’s attempt to convince African leaders to adhere to the Kiev-Western narrative absolutely failed. Not only did most African heads of state refuse to listen to the Ukrainian leader, but there was no adherence to the pro-Kiev speech on the part of those who attended the conference. For the African Union, the meeting was just a diplomatic formality, with no real gains or changes in position – which reveals that Zelensky’s plans did not work as expected.

This failure, however, was predictable for any realistic analyst. For African leaders, it is really hard to believe the fallacious narrative that Ukraine is a simple “victim” of an “unjustified aggression”. African countries are used to centuries of Western interventionism and violence and the peoples of this continent react to this with strong distrust of everything that Western nations support. As Zelensky is the ally of the US and Europe, he will likely be viewed with suspicion by countries that suffer so much from Western colonialist mentality and praxis.

In addition, there are other factors that need to be mentioned. Zelensky’s arguments that the food crisis is caused exclusively by Russia are no longer able to convince public opinion and state authorities. It is evident that, more than the conflict itself, the crisis has been caused by the sanctions against Russia, which motivates emerging countries to be enthusiastic about the end of these sanctions. Also, there are many reports that Kiev is exporting grain to the US and Europe in exchange for weapons, which is unacceptable.

Furthermore, there has recently been a strong wave of popular support for the operation in Ukraine from citizens of several African countries, especially in the regions most affected by terrorism. After the abandonment that Africa has suffered from the West in terms of security policies and defense cooperation, seeking Russian support has become the greatest hope for the members of the African Union, which is why recently there have been popular demonstrations in support of all Moscow’s actions, alongside requests for help to solve Africa’s internal problems.

In fact, in international relations, nothing matters more than cooperation. Zelensky will not be able to garner African support if he does not show interest or conditions to cooperate with Africa. Kiev currently has nothing to offer African countries, as it is economically broken and militarily virtually neutralized. On the other hand, Russia shows itself as a pillar for African food security and as a hope against terrorism in the continent. It is absolutely expected that in this context the African Union will decline its ties with Kiev and seek to approach the side that offers the best opportunities for cooperation.

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