



Starmer backs Zelensky after Trump calls him 'dictator'



Sir Keir called Zelensky on Wednesday evening and told him it was "perfectly reasonable" for Ukraine to "suspend elections during wartime as the UK did during World War Two", Downing Street said.

Trump had earlier criticised Zelensky, saying he had done a "terrible job" and claiming "he refuses to have elections" in Ukraine. Zelensky's five-year term was due to end in May 2024, but elections have been suspended since martial law was declared after Russia's invasion. But the deepening rift between the US and Ukraine has now increased the political jeopardy for him.

In his phone call with Zelensky, Sir Keir "stressed the need for everyone to work together", a Downing Street spokesperson said. "The prime minister reiterated his support for the US-led efforts to get a lasting peace in Ukraine that deterred Russia from any future aggression," they added. Zelensky said they had discussed "upcoming plans and opportunities",

adding: "UK's support matters indeed, and we will never forget the respect the British people have shown for Ukraine and our citizens." There has been widespread criticism of Trump's comments around the world - including from Sweden's prime minister as well as German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who said it was "simply wrong and dangerous".

Trump's former Vice-President, Mike Pence, also criticised the comments, posting on X: "Mr President, Ukraine did not 'start' this war. Russia launched an unprovoked and brutal invasion claiming hundreds of thousands of lives."