Ukraine’s First Lady, FM Visit Russia-Friendly Serbia

Monitoring Desk

**BELGRADE:** Ukraine’s first lady, Olena Zelenska, and Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba on Monday made a surprise visit to Russia-friendly Serbia, in a sign of warming ties between the two states.

Kuleba on his first visit to Serbia since the beginning of the Russian-Ukraine war in 2022, met Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and new Serbian Prime Minister Milos Vucevic, whose government has several pro-Russian ministers, including two who have been facing US sanctions.

According to a statement issued by the prime minister’s office after the talks said that Serbia is committed to respecting international law and the territorial integrity of every member of the United Nations, including Ukraine.

Although Serbia has denounced the Russian aggression on Ukraine, it has dismissed joining international sanctions against Moscow and has instead maintained friendly and warm ties with its traditional Slavic ally.

Serbia has kept neutrality regarding the war in Ukraine, and its authorities say that Serbia does not supply arms to any parties. However, there are reports that Serbia has provided arms to Ukraine through intermediary states.

The visit by Kuleba and Zelenska has been criticized in Moscow.

Soon after his talks with Kuleba on Monday, Prime Minister Milos Vucevic was to meet the Russian ambassador to Belgrade.

Serbia’s Pro-Russian President Vucic has informally met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky three times on the sidelines of international conferences. Serbia has provided Ukraine with humanitarian and financial assistance.

Although Vucic has repeatedly said that Serbia is firm on its goal of seeking European Union membership, the country under his rule appears to be shifting closer to Russia and especially China.

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