

Syrian Group Demands Prisoner Exchange for Bodies of Russia's Mi-8 Crew

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A previously unknown Syrian group has demanded the release of government prisoners in exchange for the bodies of the crew from Russia's downed Mi-8 military helicopter, the Reuters news agency reported Friday.

The group, which calls itself the General Foundation for Prisoners' Affairs, has asked for the release of prisoners held in Syrian government jails, as well as captives held by Assad's ally, the Lebanese group Hezbollah. No specific prisoners or numbers have been specified.

The organization has also called for Syrian army to raise its siege of Aleppo in certain areas, and to organize humanitarian aid for those affected by war.

The group attached the identity cards which allegedly belonged to the killed crew members — three servicemen and two officers — as proof that they held the bodies.

The Russian Mi-8 military helicopter was [shot down on Monday](#) in the Syrian province of Idlib. The crew was returning to a Russian airbase in the regime-held stronghold of Latakia after a reportedly humanitarian mission when it came under fire from ground positions.

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