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Zakharova: Russia Won't Respond to U.S. Visa Cuts Because That Would Be 'Genocide'

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Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova **Vyacheslav Prokofyev / TASS**

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova has said Russia won't retaliate against the U.S. Embassy's restrictions on visas for Russian citizens, saying that would be tantamount to "genocide."

Speaking to the opposition-leaning Dozhd television channel, Zakharova said Russia was preparing measures in response to fresh U.S. sanctions against Russia, signed into law by President Donald Trump in early August.

"When it comes to [U.S. sanctions] Russia is preparing a response, as deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov has said," Zakharova told interviewer Anton Zhelnov. "We are forced to respond."

But no action would be taken in answer to the U.S. Embassy's announcement it would limit

the processing of non-immigrant visas in Russia earlier this month, which Zakharova described as "the horror that the Americans have created."

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"There is not going to be any reaction," she said, "because that would be some kind of genocide of ordinary people."

The U.S. Embassy last week announced the suspension of visa processing last week after Moscow ordered the U.S. diplomatic mission to cut its staff to 455.

The move is one of a series of tit-for-tat measures between Russia and the United States and followed the expulsion late last year by then-President Barack Obama of dozens of Russian diplomats over allegations of Russian meddling in the U.S. presidential election.

"Six months after, in an attempt to establish a dialogue, we proposed considering the option of limiting U.S. diplomatic staff to achieve parity [to 455]," Zakharova said. "And they [the Americans] took that decision themselves."

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