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Kremlin Expresses Skepticism Over Yulia Skripal's First Media Outing

By Reuters

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Yulia Skripal, Dmitry Peskov / Kremil.ru / Reuters / MT

The Kremlin said on Thursday it was deeply skeptical about Yulia Skripal's first media appearance since she and her father Sergei were poisoned by a nerve agent in England and said it was unclear if she had been talking of her own free will.

Skripal, who survived the March attack that Britain blames on Russia, told Reuters on Wednesday that she wanted to return to her country "in the longer term", despite the poisoning and felt lucky to be alive.

Related article: Yulia Skripal Says She Wants to Return to Russia in First Appearance After Poisoning

Russia denies any wrongdoing, saying it has been falsely accused of an attempt on the

Skripals' lives in order to whip up anti-Russian sentiment in the West.

"We have no grounds to trust this and to believe in it," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on a conference call on Thursday when asked about Yulia Skripal's televised statement.

"Overall, considering we are talking about a fairly unprecedented international provocation against Russia that was unleashed by Britain and London, we maintain our distrust and have every reason to do so," said Peskov.

Russia has repeatedly demanded consular access to Yulia Skripal who it says is a Russian citizen, saying international law gives it the right to talk to its own nationals, and has spoken of its fears that she and her father are being held against their will by the British authorities.

Despite her televised statement, Peskov said a litany of unanswered questions remained about Yulia Skripal.

"We still don't know what condition Yulia Skripal is in," said Peskov.

"We don't know if she made these statements of her own free will or if she was pressured, we don't where she is ... and what is being done to her and by whom, to what extent her rights are being upheld, and how legally competent she is," said Peskov.

Yulia Skripal said on Wednesday she was grateful for offers of assistance from the Russian embassy, but did not want to avail herself of them.

Skripal spoke in Russian and supplied a statement that she said she had written herself in both Russian and English. She signed both documents after making her statement.

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