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Russia Raps Netanyahu's Jordan Valley Plan Before Putin Meeting

By Reuters

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Russia condemned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plan to annex the Jordan Valley ahead of a meeting between the Israeli leader and President Vladimir Putin later on Thursday, warning it could sharply increase regional tensions.

Netanyahu, who is campaigning for re-election on Sept. 17, announced on Tuesday he intended to "apply Israeli sovereignty" to the Jordan Valley and adjacent northern Dead Sea — territory in the West Bank that it captured in the 1967 Middle East war and which Palestinians seek for a state.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement late on Wednesday that it had noted what it said was the Arab world's "strongly negative reaction" to Netanyahu's announcement.

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"We share concerns about such plans from the Israeli leadership, the implementation of which could sharply escalate tensions in the region, undermine hope for establishing a long-awaited peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors," it said.

Netanyahu and Putin are due to hold talks in the southern Russian Black Sea city of Sochi later on Thursday.

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