

Russia Rules Out Prisoner Swap With Israel Ahead of Putin's Visit

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed “ceaseless efforts” to secure Issachar’s release in a letter his office published Monday. **Artyom Geodakyan / TASS**

Russia does not plan to exchange a U.S.-Israeli backpacker jailed on drug charges ahead of President Vladimir Putin’s visit to Israel this month, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Tuesday.

Naama Issachar, 27, was sentenced to seven and a half years for drug smuggling after airport authorities found less than 10 grams of hashish in her bag during her layover in Moscow. Russia asked Israel in October to swap Issachar for a suspected Russian hacker, whom Israel [extradited](#) to the United States in what Moscow saw as a snub.

“The exchange [of Issachar] option is not under consideration, as far as I know,” Deputy Foreign Minister Yevgeny Ivanov was [quoted](#) by the state-run TASS news agency as saying.

Putin is expected in Israel to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp on Jan. 27. His invitation stirred controversy in Poland, whose

president pulled out of the event amid Warsaw's ongoing [spat](#) with Putin over the origins of World War II.

Issachar's mother Yaffa Issachar appealed to Israeli President Reuven Rivlin to not host Putin at his residence, The Times of Israel [reported](#) earlier this month. "It is my intention to come straight from Moscow to the entrance to the president's residence that same evening and block with my body the entrance of the Russian president and his delegation," Issachar's mother said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed "ceaseless efforts" to secure Issachar's release in a letter his office [published](#) Monday.

"We do not abandon anyone to their fate and so it is in your case as well," Netanyahu wrote.

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