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Russia's Lavrov Calls for Urgent Middle East Quartet Meeting

By AFP

May 12, 2021



Lavrov

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Wednesday called for an urgent meeting of the Middle East Quartet in order to halt violence between Israel and the Palestinians.

Speaking alongside United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Lavrov said: "Today we've come to the common opinion that the most pressing task is to convene the Quartet of international mediators -- Russia, the United States, the UN and the EU."

Lavrov said it would be best to organize such a meeting at the ministerial level, adding that Russia relied on Guterres to organize it in the near future.

Guterres for his part said the UN was "fully ready" to resume the work of the Quartet and facilitate dialogue between the two sides.

"We also support all steps towards de-escalation as well as the resumption of the peace

process which has long been dormant," he said in comments translated into Russian.

The Israeli army has launched hundreds of air strikes on the Gaza Strip since Monday, while Palestinian militants have launched more than 1,000 rockets in some of the worst violence in seven years.

The intense hostilities have left at least 65 dead and hundreds injured.

Earlier Wednesday Russian President Vladimir Putin urged Israel and the Palestinians to halt fighting in a call with Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

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