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Russia Ready to Help Overcome Food Crisis if West Lifts Sanctions — Putin

By AFP

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Putin made the statement in a telephone call with Italy's Prime Minister Mario Draghi. **kremlin.ru**

Moscow is ready to make a "significant contribution" to averting a looming food crisis if the West lifts sanctions imposed on Russia over Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin said in a telephone call with Italy's Prime Minister Mario Draghi.

"Vladimir Putin emphasizes that the Russian Federation is ready to make a significant contribution to overcoming the food crisis through the export of grain and fertilizer, subject to the lifting of politically motivated restrictions by the West," the Kremlin said in a statement following the call.

It added that Putin also spoke about the "steps taken to ensure the safety of navigation, including the daily opening of humanitarian corridors for the exit of civilian ships from the ports of the Azov and the Black Sea, which is impeded by the Ukrainian side."

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Putin also described as "unfounded" accusations that Russia was to blame for the problems with food supplies on the global market.

A statement from the Italian government said "the call was dedicated to developments in Ukraine and efforts to find a common solution to the ongoing food crisis, as well as the severe repercussions for the world's poorest countries."

Russia was slapped with unprecedented sanctions after Putin ordered troops into neighboring Ukraine on February 24.

The sanctions and military action have disrupted supplies of fertilizer, wheat, and other commodities from both Russia and Ukraine.

The two countries produce 30 percent of the global wheat supply.

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