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Moscow Orders Jewish Agency to Halt Russia Operations – Reports

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Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency

Russian officials have allegedly ordered the Jewish Agency for Israel to stop all activity inside the country in a measure that could impact thousands of Russian Jews who want to repatriate to Israel, The Jerusalem Post reported on Tuesday.

The Jewish Agency in Russia confirmed that it received a letter from the Russian government earlier this week, but did not provide further details.

"Contact with the [Russian] authorities takes place continuously, with the aim of continuing our activities in accordance with the rules set by relevant bodies," the agency told the Jerusalem Post.

In a comment to Russia's RBC news website, the Jewish Agency denied it had received such orders from Moscow officials.

"There have been no requests for an immediate cessation of activities," the agency said.

The incident comes amid growing tension between Moscow and Jerusalem over Israel's support of Kyiv in the Kremin's invasion of Ukraine.

Moscow chief rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt fled Russia due to pressure to support the Russian military campaign in Ukraine, his daughter-in-law said last month.

Goldschmidt told Britain's The Times that he had been advised against returning to Moscow and that he could not go further in publicly condemning the war to ensure the "survival" of Russia's Jewish community.

Senior sources in Russia's Jewish community, which includes some 500,000 people, claimed "they fear they won't be able to escape the country" and "they fear for their lives," the Jerusalem Post reported.

The Jewish Agency provides assistance to Jews who want to immigrate to Israel, a decision also known as making aliyah. If the agency stops its work in Russia, it will be the first time in three decades that such repatriation efforts have been banned in the country.

Israel's Aliyah and Integration Minister Pnina Tamano Shata told the Jerusalem Post she has "appealed to the Prime Minister to work with the Moscow administration to resolve the problem."

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