

Kremlin Says Move Against Jewish Agency Should Not Be 'Politicized'

By [AFP](#)

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The Kremlin said Tuesday that a move to close in Russia the agency that processes Jewish immigration to Israel should not be "politicized," calling it a purely legal matter.

In a surprise move, a Moscow court said last week that the Justice Ministry had requested the "dissolution" of the Jewish Agency because of unspecified legal violations.

Tens of thousands of Russians have left the country after President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine on Feb. 24 and the West slapped unprecedented sanctions against Moscow.

"The situation should not be politicized or projected onto the entirety of Russian-Israeli relations," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Tuesday.

"There are issues from the point of view of complying with Russian law," he added.

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"This situation should be treated very carefully."

Peskov did not provide further details.

Analysts say the move could be a warning shot from the Kremlin towards Israel's prime minister, who has taken a tougher rhetorical line over the Ukraine conflict than his predecessor, as well as an attempt to slow a brain drain from Russia.

Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid warned Moscow over the weekend that shutting the agency would have "serious" consequences.

A first hearing in the case is due this week.

The agency, established in 1929, played a key role in the creation of the state of Israel in 1948.

It began working in Russia in 1989, two years before the end of the Soviet Union, after which hundreds of thousands of Jews from all over the U.S.S.R. left for Israel.

More than 1 million of Israel's 9.4 million residents today have roots in the former Soviet Union.

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