

How Have Russian Officials, State Media Figures Reacted to the Outbreak of War in Israel?

October 09, 2023



Israeli emergency responders cordon off the site of a rocket attack in the southern Israeli city of Ashdod.
Ahmad Gharabli / AFP

Israel on Sunday formally declared war against the Hamas militant group after its fighters launched an unprecedented surprise attack against the country, which by Monday had already resulted in the deaths of more than 1,100 people in both Israel and Gaza.

Russian officials and media figures have not signaled explicit support for either of the warring sides, instead calling for de-escalation and peace talks. They did however blame the West, and especially the United States, for what they called a decades-long failure to ensure peace and security in the region.

The Moscow Times has collected key reactions as of Monday afternoon:

The Kremlin

President Vladimir Putin, who was celebrating his 71st birthday on Saturday as Hamas fighters launched their attack on Israel, has not yet publicly commented on the outbreak of hostilities.

The Kremlin refrained from commenting on the military confrontation until Monday afternoon, when presidential spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said that Moscow was “seriously concerned” and called on both parties to engage in peace talks.

"The continuation of such a round of violence is, of course, fraught with further escalation and expansion of the conflict. This is a great danger for the region, so we are extremely concerned," Peskov [told](#) reporters.

When asked about Moscow's stance on Hamas, he said: "First, everything there [in Israel and Gaza] should get out of the active combat phase of war. While this active phase is ongoing, it is difficult to talk about anything for now."

"The risk of third forces becoming involved in this conflict is high," Peskov said, according to the state-run TASS news agency, after the U.S. moved warships closer to its ally Israel.

Sergei Lavrov, Russian Foreign Minister

Lavrov said Monday that creating a Palestinian state was the "most reliable" solution for peace in Israel and that fighting terrorism alone would not ensure security.

Creating a "Palestinian state that would live side by side with Israel... is the most reliable path to solve (the conflict)," Lavrov said during a press conference with the head of the Arab League, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, who visited Russia to discuss a resolution to the conflict.

"We cannot agree with those who say that security can only be ensured through a fight with terrorism."

He said Moscow was "deeply concerned that hundreds of Israelis and Palestinians have died and that the Gaza Sector has been declared a target for Israeli retaliation."

Maria Zakharova, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman

"Russia is gravely concerned over a sharp escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In this regard we would like to reaffirm our principled and consistent stance that this conflict, which has continued for 75 years, cannot be resolved by force and can be settled exclusively by political and diplomatic means," Zakharova [said](#) in a statement as hostilities broke out early Saturday.

"We regard the current large-scale escalation as another extremely dangerous manifestation of a vicious circle of violence resulting from a chronic failure to comply with the corresponding resolutions of the UN and its Security Council and the blocking by the West of the work of the Middle East Quartet of international mediators made up of Russia, the United States, the EU and the UN."

Dmitry Medvedev, deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council

Medvedev, the former Russian president who has become known for his extreme and outlandish comments about the war in Ukraine since Moscow's February 2022 invasion, placed the blame for the outbreak of war in Israel squarely on the United States in a short message posted on social media Saturday.

"Clashes between Hamas and Israel on the 50th anniversary of the start of the Yom Kippur War could have been expected. That's what Washington and its allies should have been focused on," Medvedev [said](#) on Telegram.

"But instead of actively working to resolve the Palestine-Israeli [conflict], these idiots have picked a fight with us and are helping neo-Nazis with might and main, pushing two close people together."

"What can stop America's maniacal passion to stoke conflict across the entire planet? Probably only a civil war on the territory of the United States," he said.

In a later post on Telegram, Medvedev [claimed](#) that weapons provided to Ukraine by the West had ended up in the hands of those fighting in Israel, implying that Kyiv had resold Western arms to Hamas.

Vladimir Solovyov, pro-Kremlin state television presenter

Solovyov [described](#) the Saturday attack by Hamas on Israel as a "perfectly timed, perfectly prepared operation that exposes the failure of everyone who should have known and understood something about Israel's security and defense capabilities. They failed terribly."

"Such a terrible attack, such a long-lasting slap in the face, has probably never happened. It turns out that not long ago before these events, Israeli intelligence concluded that nothing would happen and that everything would be fine on the 50th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War," he said on his live online show.

"Who do we sympathize with? We sympathize with peace. This conflict was smoldering, it was inevitable. It was obvious that sooner or later the situation would escalate to the point where it would flare up."

Margarita Simonyan, RT Editor-in-Chief

"The country that is not at war with its neighbors is again at war with its neighbors. We await the exodus of Russian pacifists. Then again, we won't hold our breath," Simonyan [said](#) on social media.

Anatoly Viktorov, Russian Ambassador to Israel

"From the very beginning of the escalation, we have been in contact with all parties — with the Palestinians, Israelis, regional neighbors," Viktorov [said](#) on state television.

"It seems that there is no specific reason for such a sharp escalation, but actually, we need to look at the fact that the political process [toward a peace settlement] was actually blocked — it was blocked by the efforts of the United States and the European Union," he said, adding that the West was attempting to impose a "new security architecture without due

consideration of Palestinians' just desire to create their own independent state.”

Meanwhile, Viktorov promised to take “radical measures” to evacuate Russian citizens from the country should it become necessary.

"The number of losses on both sides is large, very large. We do not exclude [the possibility] that there may be Russian citizens among the victims. As soon as we have this information, we will provide all possible assistance to the relatives and all the victims," Viktorov was [quoted](#) as saying by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

As of Monday morning, he said there was “no information confirming the death, injury or missing of Russian citizens” in Israel, but added that “several requests” had been sent to the embassy “by the media and through the internet.”

Leonid Slutsky, State Duma deputy

Slutsky, who heads the Russian parliament's international affairs committee, [accused](#) the West and the UN of “blocking” progress on resolving the decades-long Palestinian-Israeli crisis through peaceful means, drawing parallels with Russia's war against Ukraine.

“Moscow again — as it was before the start of the special military operation — warned that it is better to solve problems, no matter how complex they may be, through negotiations and compromises, and not with weapons,” Slutsky said on Telegram, saying that Western nations continuously torpedo Russian attempts to ensure security across the globe.

“It is necessary to stop the violence as soon as possible and return the parties to the negotiating table,” he said.

AFP contributed reporting.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/10/09/how-have-russian-officials-state-media-figures-reacted-to-the-outbreak-of-war-in-israel-a82705>