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Israel-Hamas War Pulls Russians' Attention Away From Ukraine – Analysis

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Israeli soldiers work on a tank at a staging ground near the Israeli Gaza border. **Tsafrir Abayov / AP / TASS**

Russians' interest in the deadly Hamas attack on Israel was significantly higher than interest in the war in Ukraine over the weekend, according to an analysis of Google Trends data by the independent media outlet Vyorstka.

Observers have called the attack, which the Palestinian militant group launched on the Russian president's birthday, "Hamas' gift to Vladimir Putin," as it threatens to pull Western attention and support away from Ukraine and toward Israel.

Inside Russia, searches on topics related to Hamas and Israel peaked at midnight Sunday, with data showing that Russians were 16 times more likely to Google "Israel" than "Ukraine."

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By 11 a.m. on Monday the number of searches for "Israel" had more than halved, though people were still 10 times as likely to search for "Israel" than "Ukraine."

Data published by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics shows that 60.9% of immigrants to Israel in 2022, or 45,472 people, came from Russia, while 19.6% of immigrants, or 14,656 people, came from Ukraine. This marks a dramatic increase from 2021, when only 7,640 Russians and 3,059 Ukrainians immigrated to the country.

At least two Russian citizens had been killed in the Hamas attack as of Tuesday morning, the Russian Embassy in Tel Aviv said, and four were reported missing.

Israeli and Palestinian officials have reported nearly 1,600 deaths overall.

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