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400 Russians Seek Evacuation From Besieged Gaza Strip

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The aftermath of an Israeli air strike on the Gaza Strip. **Youssef Mohammed / TASS**

Around 400 Russian nationals are seeking to evacuate the Gaza Strip as the Israeli military continues to bombard the coastal enclave in retaliation to Hamas' surprise attack, Russia's diplomatic mission in Palestine said Thursday.

Alia Zaripova, the spokeswoman for Russia's representative mission in Ramallah, said Moscow was working to evacuate its citizens from the besieged territory, according to the state-run TASS news agency.

An additional 110 citizens of Palestine, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and Kazakhstan have also requested assistance from the Russian office with evacuations, Zaripova said.

The United Nations humanitarian office OCHA says nearly 340,000 Palestinians have been displaced in the unfolding humanitarian crisis.

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Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Moscow was working with the Egyptian government to organize the evacuation of its citizens from the Gaza Strip.

At the same time, Israel's Ambassador to Russia Alexander Ben Zvi said Tel Aviv was in talks with Cairo on opening the border post with Gaza to allow civilian evacuations.

It has been six days since Hamas fighters stormed into southern Israel, killing at least 1,200 Israelis, mostly civilians, and taking around 150 hostages in an unprecedented attack.

In retaliation, Israel has pounded Gaza with airstrikes, leveling entire city blocks and killing at least 1,100 people.

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