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Anti-Israeli Mob Storms Airport in Russia's Dagestan

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Ramzan Rashidov / TASS

A mob of anti-Israeli protesters stormed an airport in the North Caucasus republic of Dagestan on Sunday night following calls on social media to block a flight from Tel Aviv from landing in the majority-Muslim region.

Video shared on social media showed hundreds of people gathered outside Makhachkala International Airport in the evening, with demonstrators brandishing Palestinian flags and shouting anti-Israel chants.

Some of the signs held by demonstrators read "Child killers have no place in Dagestan" and "We are against Jewish refugees."

The independent Mediazona news website reported that the demonstration was prompted by calls spread on the Telegram messaging app earlier on Sunday to block a plane purportedly carrying refugees from Israel and scheduled to arrive directly from Tel Aviv.

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According to local media in Dagestan, some of the demonstrators were stopping cars outside Makhachkala's airport to check the personal identification documents of drivers and passengers as they searched for Israeli citizens among the motorists.

The flight from Tel Aviv landed at 7:17 p.m. local time, according to the airport's website, after which the demonstration devolved into a riot, with crowds storming into the airport, breaking past security and running onto the tarmac.

One group of people who ran onto the airport's tarmac surrounded a plane and jumped onto its wings, the pro-Kremlin newspaper Izvestia reported.

Videos shared online showed what appeared to be riot police arriving at the airport and rioters lying on the tarmac as police walked around them.

Russia's civil aviation agency said later that all rioters had been removed from the airport, without specifying whether any of them were detained.

It added that all flights to and from the airport would be suspended until 3:00 a.m. on Nov. 6 due to the security breach.

Video published online later showed groups of men throwing stones and other objects at police from outside the airport's fence and police firing shots into the air in response.

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The Dagestan branch of Russia's Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, said late Sunday night that it had opened a criminal case on charges of "organizing mass unrest," a crime punishable by up to 15 years in prison.

The Israeli Prime Minister's Office and Foreign Ministry said they were monitoring the situation in Dagestan and said no Israeli nationals or Jewish people were onboard the Tel Aviv-Makhachkala flight.

Regions across the North Caucasus, but especially Dagestan, have witnessed a series of anti-Israeli demonstrations in the weeks since Israel launched a relentless bombardment of the Gaza Strip in response to Hamas fighters' bloody attack inside Israel on Oct. 7.

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