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Moscow ‘Shocked’ by Timeline To Evacuate Russians From Gaza

By AFP

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Rafah Crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. **Al Jazeera (CC BY-SA 2.0)**

Russia said Thursday it was "shocked" by the Israeli ambassador saying it could take up to two weeks to evacuate Russian citizens from the Gaza Strip.

Israel's envoy to Moscow told Russian state media this week that with 500-600 people leaving each day, and 7,000 waiting to be evacuated, it could take two weeks to get Russian citizens out of Gaza.

"We were truly shocked to hear that statement," Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told reporters on Thursday.

"This logic is unacceptable," she said, adding that Russia had followed all the requested procedures for submitting evacuation lists to the relevant authorities.

More than 500 Russian citizens are awaiting evacuation, Russian state media reported earlier in November, citing the Russian diplomatic mission to Palestine.

No Russians have yet been publicly confirmed as having left since the Rafah checkpoint with Egypt first reopened on Nov. 1 to allow the evacuation of stranded foreigners and dual nationals.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has criticized the West for allegedly stoking tensions in the region and Israel for its conduct in the conflict.

The war started over a month ago when Hamas militants crossed into Israel and killed about 1,400 people, mainly civilians, and seized about 240 hostages, according to Israeli officials.

Aiming to destroy Hamas, Israel retaliated with a relentless bombardment and ground invasion of the Gaza Strip that, according to the Hamas-run Palestinian territory's health ministry, has killed more than 10,500 people, also mostly civilians and many of them children.

Citizens of the United States, France, Britain and Canada are among those who have been evacuated from Gaza so far.

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