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Russia Says 'Grateful' to Hamas for Gaza Hostage Release

By AFP

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Two Russian hostages freed by Hamas militants this week. **Video grab**

Moscow thanked the Hamas militant group on Thursday for freeing two Russian hostages from Gaza, which was organized separately from a truce deal with Israel.

The statement came a day after Hamas released two Russian citizens, both women, in what it said was a move "in appreciation" of President Vladimir Putin.

"We are grateful to the leadership of the Hamas movement for the positive response to our constant appeals," the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

"We will continue to strive for the speedy release of the remaining Russians held in the Gaza Strip," it added.

The two women were handed over to the Red Cross in Egypt via the Rafah crossing on Wednesday.

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Last week, Hamas released another Russian citizen, Ron Krivoy, who was working as a sound operator at the Supernova festival in Israel when Hamas attacked.

He was also freed separately from the truce deal with Israel.

"We note that the Russian citizens were given the possibility to come home without being bound by the fulfillment of the conditions agreed upon between Israel and Hamas," Moscow said.

It did not say in its statement how many Russian citizens remain in Hamas captivity in Gaza.

Unlike most Western countries, Russia does not recognize Hamas as a terrorist organization, and Putin has repeatedly called for the creation of a Palestinian state.

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