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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Halts Flights to Israel, Jordan, Iran Following Attack on Israel

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The Israeli Iron Dome air defense system launches to intercept missiles fired from Iran, in central Israel, Sunday, April 14. **AP Photo / Tomer Neuberg / TASS**

Russia has suspended flights to Israel, Jordan and Iraq after Tehran launched an unprecedented attack against Israel overnight.

Late Saturday, Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps announced that they had launched "dozens of drones and missiles" toward military sites on Israeli territory. Tehran the attack as a justified response to a strike that destroyed its consulate building in Damascus earlier this month.

Russia's civil aviation agency Rosaviatsia announced Sunday that it had suspended flights from Russia to Israel, Jordan and Iraq.

"Flights by Russian airlines to these countries (or the use of the airspace of these countries for transit flights operated by Russian airlines) are suspended until the restrictions are lifted," Rosaviatsia said on its Telegram channel.

Russia's Association of Tour Operators (ATOR) said dozens of Russian tourists are currently in Iran on organized tours.

Israel's army said it had shot 99% of the drones and missiles with the help of the United States and other allies, declaring Iran's attack "foiled."

Experts have suggested that Saturday's slow-moving drone attack was calibrated to represent a show of power but also allow some wiggle room.

Russia's Foreign Ministry on Sunday called on Iran and Israel to exercise restraint and for the crisis to be solved through political and diplomatic means.

It also blamed "Western members" of the UN Security Council for its failure "to adequately respond to the attack on the Iranian consular mission."

"We potentially have a new acute Middle East crisis now. It all depends on the next steps of the parties involved, or lack thereof," Russia's deputy representative to the UN Dmitry Polyansky said on Sunday.

The Russian Foreign Ministry on Thursday strongly advised citizens against traveling to the Middle East, particularly Israel, Lebanon and Palestine.

Russia has previously condemned Israel's conduct in its six-month war in Gaza.

Moscow had traditionally tried to maintain relations with all major powers in the Middle East.

But the Gaza conflict has dented its ties with Israel and it has already been strengthening military and political ties with Iran.

Peskov said Russia had not been approached as a potential mediator between the two arch-rivals.

AFP contributed reporting.

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