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Putin Calls Iran's Raisi 'True Friend of Russia,' Offers Condolensces Over Death

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Vladimir Putin and Ebrahim Raisi in the Kremlin in December 2023. **Sergei Bobylev, TASS / kremlin.ru**

President Vladimir Putin on Monday expressed his condolences over the death of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, who was killed in a helicopter crash over the weekend.

"Sayyid Ibrahim Raisi was an outstanding politician whose whole life was devoted to serving [his] country," read a statement published on the Kremlin's website.

"As a true friend of Russia, he made an invaluable personal contribution to the development of good-neighborly relations between our countries, and made great efforts to bring them to the level of strategic partnership," the statement continued.

Tehran announced Raisi's death early Monday after rescue teams found his crashed helicopter in a fog-shrouded mountain region, sparking mourning in the Islamic republic. He was killed along with the country's foreign minister and other officials.

"The servant of the Iranian nation, Ayatollah Ebrahim Raisi has achieved the highest level of

martyrdom while serving the people," Iranian state television announced, showing pictures of Raisi as a voice recited the Koran.

The ultraconservative Raisi, 63, had been in office since 2021, during a time that has seen Iran rocked by mass protests, an economic crisis deepened by U.S. sanctions, and armed exchanges with arch-enemy Israel.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had earlier expressed his condolences over the death of Raisi and the other Iranian officials on board the crashed helicopter, saying "We will always remember these outstanding political figures as true patriots of the Islamic Republic."

AFP contributed reporting.

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