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Russia Condemns Killing of Hamas Leader Haniyeh

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Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh. **Vahid Salemi / AP / TASS**

The Kremlin said it "strongly condemns" the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Iran after the militant group announced his death early Wednesday.

Hamas said the political leader was killed in an Israeli strike in Iran, where he was attending the inauguration ceremony of the country's new president. The group vowed that the killing would "not go unanswered."

"We believe that such actions are directed against attempts to establish peace in the region and can significantly destabilize an already tense situation," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Wednesday.

His comments mirrored those issued earlier by the Russian Foreign Ministry, which said in a statement that "it's clear that the organizers of this political assassination were aware of the dangerous consequences for the entire region of this action."

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The Foreign Ministry also urged "all parties involved to exercise restraint and abandon steps that could lead to a dramatic deterioration of the security situation in the region."

Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov warned earlier on Wednesday that the killing of Haniyeh could lead to a larger regional conflict.

"This is all very bad. This is an absolutely unacceptable political assassination, and it will lead to further escalation of tensions," he told the state news agency RIA Novosti.

Russia joins China, Turkey, Qatar and other countries in condemning the killing of Haniyeh, as some Western governments, such as those of the United States and Australia, advocated against any escalation in the Middle East.

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