

Moscow Calls for Release of Russians Held Hostage in Gaza

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Alexander Trufanov. **Video grab**

Russia's Foreign Ministry on Friday [called on](#) Palestinian militants to release two Russian-Israeli hostages after one of them appeared in a video earlier this week.

Islamic Jihad, a Palestinian militant group allied with Hamas, released a video on Wednesday of Alexander Trufanov, who was forcibly taken to Gaza amid the Hamas-led attack on Israel last October.

In the video, the bearded Trufanov spoke in Hebrew about Israeli military operations in Lebanon and urged Israelis to put pressure on the government to secure the release of hostages.

“We reiterate our call for the immediate and unconditional release of all civilians in the hands of Palestinian groups, first and foremost of our compatriots Trufanov and [Maxim] Kharkin,” Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Kharkin was among thousands of people attending the Supernova music festival just a few miles from Gaza when Hamas militants launched their attack on Oct. 7 last year, killing some 1,200 people and abducting another 250. Israel says around 65 hostages remain alive in captivity.

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“The release of hostages is a priority in our contacts with representatives of the political wing of Hamas and other Palestinian organizations,” Russia’s Foreign Ministry said.

Trufanov was abducted with his girlfriend, Sapir Cohen, from the Nir Oz kibbutz near the Gaza Strip. Trufanov's mother, grandmother and girlfriend, who were also taken hostage, were among those released during a brief ceasefire and prisoner exchange last November.

Trufanov’s father, Vitaly, was killed during the Oct. 7 attack.

Israel’s devastating war against Hamas in Gaza has killed more than 43,000 people, Palestinian health officials said. Human Rights Watch recently [accused](#) Israel of systematically forcing the mass displacement of civilians in Gaza, which amounts to a war crime and a crime against humanity.

AFP contributed reporting.

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