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Russia Tells Hamas to ‘Keep Promises’ on Hostage Release

By AFP

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The Russian Foreign Ministry **Alexander Shcherbak / TASS**

A deputy Russian foreign minister met Monday with a senior Hamas official in Moscow and urged Hamas to keep "promises" to release a Russian hostage, the ministry said.

Mikhail Bogdanov, who is also President Vladimir Putin's special envoy on the Middle East, met with Musa Abu Marzuk, a senior member of Hamas' political bureau.

Russia has called for the release of dual Russian-Israeli citizen Alexander Trufanov and Maxim Herkin, an Israeli man from the Donbas area of Ukraine with Russian relatives.

At their talks, Bogdanov "again placed particular stress on the necessity of carrying out the promises given by Hamas's leadership on releasing from imprisonment Russian citizen Trufanov and other hostages," the ministry said.

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Trufanov, known as Sasha, was abducted on Oct. 7, 2023, with his girlfriend, Sapir Cohen, from the Nir Oz kibbutz near the Gaza border.

His father was killed in the attack and his mother and grandmother were abducted and released in November 2023. The family had emigrated to Israel from Russia in the late 1990s.

Islamic Jihad, a militant group allied with Hamas, published undated clips of Trufanov in November 2024.

Herkin emigrated to Israel from Ukraine with his mother and was taken from the Supernova rave music festival.

Marzuk told Russia's RIA Novosti news agency Monday that "Trufanov will definitely be released in the near future. He will be released despite the fact that he is a soldier but the decision was taken to release him in the first stage of the deal."

"That is our answering gesture to Russia's position on the Palestinian question," Marzuk was quoted as saying in translated comments.

Talks on releasing Herkin will be held at a "second stage," he added.

The Russian ministry said the two also discussed "the progress of the ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip, with the stress on the importance of increasing humanitarian aid to the suffering Palestinian population."

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