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Russian Embassy in Israel Advises Citizens to Leave Country as Air War Intensifies

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A building in the Israeli city of Bat Yam damaged in an air strike by Iran. **Andrei Shirokov / TASS**

Russia's Embassy in Tel Aviv is urging its citizens to leave the country amid intensifying hostilities between Israel and Iran, which have exchanged volleys of missiles and drones since late last week, Ambassador Anatoly Viktorov told state media on Monday.

"All Russian citizens who are in Israel should leave the country until the situation normalizes," Viktorov told the Rossia 24 broadcaster, advising citizens to leave through Egypt, where they have visa-free access and can take flights back to Russia.

"The situation is tense, I must admit," he said. "The threat to the lives and health of both diplomats and Russian citizens in Israel is quite real."

The ambassador said contingency plans are being considered in case a broader evacuation becomes necessary. Over the weekend, Russia's Embassy in Tehran temporarily suspended

activity at its consulate there and pulled a group of its citizens from the country.

Related article: Russia Pulls Citizens From Iran, Halts Tehran Consular Activity

At least 24 people in Israel have been killed in recent Iranian strikes, carried out in retaliation for Israel's sweeping attacks on Iran's military and nuclear infrastructure. Authorities in Iran say that at least 224 people have been killed in Israeli attacks since last Friday.

Russia's Embassy in Israel said Saturday it had no reports of Russian citizens among the dead or wounded.

Following official travel warnings issued last Friday, Russia's civil aviation authority ordered airlines to suspend flights to Iran and Israel and to avoid the airspace over those countries, as well as Jordan and Iraq, until at least June 26.

President Vladimir Putin, who maintains ties with both Iran and Israel, condemned the Israeli strikes and warned of a "dangerous escalation" in the Middle East. He also told U.S. President Donald Trump that Russia was prepared to mediate between the two sides.

Russia's Embassy in Israel had last week advised Russian nationals against visiting the country as the air war with Iran broke out.

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