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Putin Expresses Condolences to Iran's President Over Khamenei 'Cynical Assassination'

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Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday expressed condolences over what he called the "assassination" of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran.

"Please accept my deepest condolences in connection with the assassination of the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran ... committed in cynical violation of all norms of human morality and international law," Putin said in a message to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian published by the Kremlin.

"In our country, Ayatollah Khamenei will be remembered as an outstanding statesman who made a tremendous personal contribution to the development of friendly Russian-Iranian relations," he added.

Iranian state television confirmed the death of its supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and launched a fresh wave of attacks on Sunday as Israel hit back at the capital Tehran.

Russia's Foreign Ministry on Sunday said Khamenei's death as well as other top Iranian officials was "met with outrage and deep regret in Moscow."

Russia "resolutely and consistently condemns the practice of political assassinations and the 'hunting' of leaders of sovereign states," the ministry added.

It called for "an immediate de-escalation, a cessation of hostilities, and a return to the political and diplomatic process."

Senior Russian diplomats have warned that the U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran would bring the region to the brink of a nuclear mishap and escalate tensions beyond the region.

Russia's Permanent Representative to the UN Vasily Nebenzya decried the strikes as a "genuine betrayal of diplomacy" and dismissed Western arguments that Iran was seeking to acquire nuclear weapons as "completely unfounded."

"Despite its willingness to engage in the diplomatic process, Tehran is once again being stabbed in the back," Nebenzya said at an emergency UN Security Council session Saturday.

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Referring to Iran's retaliatory strikes on U.S. military assets in Iraq and the Gulf states, Nebenzya said the U.S.-Israeli attacks "spurred the escalation in the region and is liable to spill over far beyond the region."

Russia's Foreign Ministry on Saturday condemned the U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran as a "deliberate, premeditated and unprovoked act of armed aggression... under the cover of the renewed negotiation process."

The ministry also warned the attacks brought the region to the "brink of a humanitarian, economic and potentially even radiological disaster."

"[The U.S. and Israel] cannot but recognize that they are effectively prompting countries cross the globe, and the Middle East in particular, to pursue ever more grave means of countering emerging threats by plunging the Middle East into the abyss of uncontrolled escalation," it said.

The statements reiterated key issues raised by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov during a call with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Aragchi on Saturday.

Lavrov and the ministry suggested that Moscow was misled by Israel's "assurances conveyed to Russia indicating that Israel had no interest in entering into military confrontation with Iran."

Russia's air transport authority Rosaviatsia said all commercial flights to Israel and Iran were cancelled "until further notice."

Tehran has stood by as one of Moscow's closest allies throughout Russia's Ukraine offensive, and the Kremlin had earlier called for restraint in the run-up to the U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran. In 2025, Russia and Iran signed a strategic partnership treaty aimed at strengthening ties — including in military matters.

AFP contributed reporting.

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