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# Putin Vows ‘Unwavering Support’ to Iran’s New Ayatollah

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Mojtaba Khamenei in 2019. **ZUMA Wire**

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday pledged “unwavering support” to Iran's new supreme leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, who was appointed after his father and predecessor was killed in U.S.-Israeli strikes.

“I would like to reaffirm our unwavering support for Tehran and solidarity with our Iranian friends,” Putin said in a message to Khamenei, adding that “Russia has been and will remain a reliable partner” to Iran.

Putin’s support for the 56-year-old Shiite cleric comes as U.S. President Donald Trump, who previously dismissed Mojtaba Khamenei as a “lightweight,” warned that Iran’s new leader “is not going to last long” without his approval.

After similar threats from Israel, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman warned that Beijing opposes targeting leaders and insists “Iran's sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity should be respected.”

Russia, one of Iran's closest partners, last week condemned U.S.-Israeli attacks on the Islamic Republic as an "unprovoked act of armed aggression." Putin slammed the Feb. 28 killing of Mojtaba Khamenei's father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, as a "cynical assassination."

"At a time when Iran is confronting armed aggression, your tenure in this high position will undoubtedly require great courage and dedication," Putin told the new ayatollah, voicing confidence that he would "unite the Iranian people in the face of severe trials."

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Mojtaba Khamenei is considered a hardliner who will continue his father's rejection of dissent.

Moscow has called for hostilities to stop and for diplomatic talks to resume. In 2025, Russia and Iran signed a strategic partnership agreement that includes provisions for countering shared threats but stops short of mutual defense obligations.

However, sources told The Washington Post on Friday that Russia is providing Iran with intelligence to help it strike American military targets in the Middle East, even as the Kremlin publicly states that officials in Tehran have not asked for any support.

*AFP contributed reporting.*

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