

Japan Sends Senior Diplomat to Russia to Seek Release of Arrested Journalist

By [AFP](#)

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Imai Yuki. **Social media**

Japan sent a senior diplomat to Moscow this week to discuss the release of a journalist arrested in Russia on spying accusations, Tokyo said Wednesday.

Russia's FSB security service said last week that a Japanese national had been arrested on the Far Eastern island of Sakhalin.

The individual was later identified as Yuki Imai from the Hokkaido Shimbun newspaper, who faces accusations of "conducting espionage activities on Russian territory."

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi has denied that Japan conducts spying activities in Russia, while the Hokkaido Shimbun has stressed its independence from the government.

On Tuesday, Kimitake Nakamura, Japan's top diplomat for Europe, met Lyudmila Vorobyova, the head of the department at the Russian Foreign Ministry dealing with much of East Asia,

according to Japan's Foreign Ministry.

"We lodged a request... that calls for the earliest possible realization of consular access to the Japanese national detained in Russia, as well as the individual's immediate release," Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara told reporters on Wednesday.

Japan also summoned Russian Ambassador Nikolay Nozdrev to lodge a formal protest over the arrest, while its foreign ministry has urged Moscow to provide him "fair and impartial treatment."

Russia has arrested several citizens of what it calls "unfriendly" countries in recent years, accusing them of working for Western intelligence services.

Kihara said the meeting on Tuesday was also held to discuss tense bilateral relations.

"Japan-Russia relations are in a difficult state," he said. "Precisely for that reason, it is necessary for the diplomatic authorities to engage in exchanges on the various issues."

For decades, Russia and Japan have been locked in a territorial dispute over the southern Kuril islands — known as the Northern Territories in Japan — which are located northeast of Japan's Hokkaido prefecture and southwest of Far East Russia's Sakhalin. The Soviet Union seized control of the islands at the end of World War II.

Japan has also sanctioned Russia over its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

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