Russian humanitarian convoy returns from Ukraine

MOSCOW, Aug. 23 (RHC) -- The Russian humanitarian convoy that had delivered aid to Ukraine's conflict-hit Lugansk region has returned to Russia, local media reported Saturday.

"The Russian humanitarian convoy has left the Ukrainian territory and is on Russian territory," Interfax news agency quoted Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova as saying.

Moscow expected the United States to not only speak about issues concerning Russia's delivery, "but also in favor of an immediate ceasefire by both conflicting parties in Ukraine," she said.

On Friday, the 280-truck convoy entered Ukraine without Kiev's consent and International Committee of the Red Cross employee's escort, triggering fierce condemnation from Kiev as well as serious concerns from major Western countries.

In a phone conversation with his German counterpart Angela Merkel, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that considering Kiev's blatant attempts to hinder the delivery of Russian humanitarian aid to Ukrainian regions caught in humanitarian crisis, the Russian leadership has decided to move the truck convoy across the Ukrainian border without their consent.

The statement also said that Putin and Merkel voiced "serious concern" over the ongoing large-scale escalation of Kiev's military operation in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions that has led to new casualties among the civilian population.

Ukraine's mainly Russian-speaking regions in the east have witnessed deadly clashes between pro-Moscow forces and the Ukrainian army since Kiev launched military operations to silence the pro-Russians.

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