

Putin expresses concern about civilian deaths in Gaza in meeting with Palestinian president

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Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, left, gestures during his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin at Novo-Ogaryovo state residence outside Moscow [Alexey Maishev/ Sputnik, Kremlin Pool Photo via AP]

Moscow, August 14 (RHC)-- Russian President Vladimir Putin has told Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas he is very concerned about the high number of Palestinian civilian casualties in Gaza.

In a meeting in Moscow on Tuesday, Abbas said that Russia was considered one of the “dearest friends” of the Palestinian people, while Putin reaffirmed Russia’s support for a two-state solution.

“Everyone is well aware that Russia today, unfortunately, must defend its interests and defend its people with arms in hand. But what is happening in the Middle East, what is happening in Palestine, of course, does not go unnoticed on our part,” Putin said, according to a Kremlin transcript. “And of course, we are watching with great pain and anxiety the humanitarian catastrophe that has unfolded in Palestine,” he added.

The meeting takes place amid rising regional tensions, with Israel preparing for anticipated retaliatory attacks from Iran and Hezbollah following a series of assassinations of high-level Hamas and Hezbollah leaders.

Russia, which has long sought to balance cordial ties with both Palestinian groups and Israel, has drawn the ire of Israel since the beginning of the war in Gaza by hosting delegations from Hamas and underscoring civilian suffering in Gaza, where Israel’s campaign has killed nearly 40,000 people and displaced more than 90 percent of the population.

While Russia has tried to position itself as a potential peacemaker in the conflict, its energies are largely focused on Ukraine, where its forces have failed to overcome fierce Ukrainian opposition after invading that country in February 2022.

On Tuesday, Russian state news agency TASS quoted Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov as saying that his government was “calling on everyone to refrain from escalating the situation from turning into a disaster for all regional players.”

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