

Israeli Delegation Heads to Moscow as Jewish Agency Faces Closure

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Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid. **The White House**

An Israeli delegation will sit down with talks with Russian officials Thursday as tensions simmer over Russian threats to close a veteran Jewish immigration agency, according to Israeli daily newspaper [Haaretz](#).

The Kremlin initially did not approve the meeting on Sunday and the delegation's trip was delayed, Haaretz reported.

The Israeli-Russian negotiations will take place the same day as a pre-trial hearing about the Russian Justice Ministry's surprise request to shut down the Jewish Agency, which processes Jewish immigration to Israel.

Lawyers began arriving at Moscow's Basmany District Court on Thursday morning for the preliminary hearing, [according](#) to news reports.

The Jewish Agency said it expects a "positive scenario" from the Israeli delegation's presence

in Moscow, according to Haaretz.

As well as a warning to Israel about its stance on the Ukraine war, analysts believe the move to shut down the Jewish Agency is an attempt to slow Russia's brain drain.

Russia's Justice Ministry accused the Jewish Agency of "contributing to help people leave [Russia]," the BBC Russian service [quoted](#) an unnamed source familiar with the ministry's June 2022 letter to the agency as saying Wednesday.

The agency's work is "detrimental to the economy and the prospects of the Russian Federation," the 20-page letter apparently read.

Established in 1929, the Jewish Agency played a key role in the creation of the state of Israel in 1948.

It began working in Russia in 1989, two years before the end of the Soviet Union.

Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid warned Moscow over the weekend that shutting the agency would have "serious" consequences.

AFP contributed reporting.

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