

Israel Gearing Up to Evacuate 75,000 Ukrainian Jews

As Ukraine-Russia tensions rise, Israel is preparing for what may become its largest airlift in 30 years.

Israeli government officials have begun laying the groundwork for the possible evacuation of Ukrainian Jews as fears of a Russian invasion continue to rise, Haaretz reported.

According to the report, representatives from the Prime Minister's Office, the foreign, defense, diaspora affairs and transportation ministries, the National Security Council and the Jewish Agency gathered on Sunday to discuss the threat level faced by Ukraine's Jewish communities.

They were also joined by officials from Nativ, an organization that maintains ties between Israel and Jewish communities in the Former Soviet Union.

Officials assessed that around 75,000 Jews in Ukraine qualify for Israeli citizenship through the Law of Return. The largest concentrations of Jews are in and around the cities of Kyiv, Odessa, Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk. It's not known how many would choose to leave for Israel or move elsewhere.

Nor is it clear if an evacuation would even be possible in a war situation.

According to Haaretz, Israel had contingency plans in the late 1980s for an emergency airlift of large numbers of Jews from the Soviet Union. Those plans are being dusted off and updated now.

However, the report stressed that despite the rising threat of war, there has been no significant rise in Ukrainian Jews seeking to immigrate.

Israel's last major airlift was Operation Solomon, a covert operation in which 14,000 Ethiopian Jews were evacuated within 36 hours amid a civil war.

Russia has massed 100,000 soldiers to its border with Ukraine. It's feared that Russian President Vladimir Putin wants to seize large swaths of Ukrainian territory or topple the government of President Volodymyr Zelensky and replace it

with a pro-Moscow regime.

The U.S put 8,500 troops on higher alert for a possible deployment to Europe. In recent days, the U.S. and several European countries have also instructed the families of diplomats living in Ukraine to leave.

Russia-Ukraine relations have been fraught ever since Ukraine first sought NATO membership in 2008. In 2014, Russia seized control of the Crimean peninsula and parts of Ukraine's eastern Donbas region. The world does not recognize the legitimacy of Russia's occupation of those areas.

Source:

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