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RUSSIANS SAY NO PLACE FOR EXTRA PALESTINIANS

MOSCOW, Jan 27, Reuter - Russian officials insisted on Monday that no additional Palestinians would be allowed to take part in the Moscow multilateral Middle East talks.

"The Palestinians are well aware Russia has no possibility of meeting such a request, though we are sorry for that," said Vladimir Petrovsky, head of the Russian committee organising the two-day meeting starting on Tuesday.

A high ranking Palestine Liberation Organisation official said in Tunis earlier that Palestinian exiles and those from Jerusalem would be included in a joint delegation with Jordan.

They were due in Moscow on Monday afternoon for the multilateral talks starting on Tuesday.

"We do face problems in this area and they are being discussed now," Petrovsky told a news conference. "We hope we will be able to find a way out."

Another official involved in organising the talks, Alexander Belonogov, told the same news conference: "The invitation was not sent to representatives of the Palestinian diaspora. We had to be guided by the agreements set out by the Madrid conference."

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PLO spokesman Mubarak Moussa told reporters in Moscow that the Palestinians were sending a large delegation including people from Jerusalem and outside the Israel-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

But they had not yet agreed with the organisers on the formula for Palestinian participation. Negotiations would start when the team arrived.

A spokesman for the Israeli delegation, led by Foreign Minister David Levy, said Palestinian representation had to conform with ground rules set when Arab-Israeli talks were launched at Madrid last October.

"Our reaction is very simple. The process is not a spontaneous process. It is a process that was agreed to after a lot of effort and this...clearly sets forth the composition of the Palestinian delegation," said Yossi Ben Dor, press attache at Israel's Moscow embassy.

Petrovsky and Belonogov also emphasised that the rules laid down for Madrid had to stand.

Israel refuses to talk to Palestinians from Jerusalem or outside the occupied territories. It has insisted that any Palestinian delegation to Moscow should be of the same composition as previous bilateral talks in Washington and Madrid.

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