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**'UNACCEPTABLE': JAPAN URGES RUSSIA TO RELEASE DETAINED FISHERMEN**

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Aljazeera (18 December 2019)

Five Japanese boats were fishing for octopus near disputed Russian-held islands when they were seized.

Japan's foreign ministry demanded the release on Wednesday of the crew of five fishing boats detained by Russia, saying the men had been doing nothing wrong and should be released quickly on humanitarian grounds.

The Japanese were seized by border guards from Russia near disputed islands north of Hokkaido that are held by Russia and claimed by Japan, as Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi was visiting Russia.

The ships were fishing for octopus near the four islands - known as the Southern Kurils in Russia and Northern Territories in Japan - when they were taken by Russian ships for "investigations" on suspicion they had violated fishing agreements, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a news conference on Wednesday.

"This is unacceptable," Suga said, adding the fishing crews had done nothing wrong.

"The government is strongly demanding, from a humanitarian perspective, the early release of the crew and ships."

Read more at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/12/japan-urges-russia-release-detained-fishermen-191218022300477.html>

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