

Diplomatic spat after Chilean president snubs new Israeli ambassador

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Israeli ambassador Gil Artzyeli speaks with members of the Israel Fire Company during a religious ceremony at a synagogue in Vina del Mar, Chile [Ramon Sernuda/Reuters]

Santiago de Chile, September 17 (RHC)-- A diplomatic dispute intensified after Chile's president put off accepting the credentials of Israel's new ambassador to Santiago over the killing in the occupied West

Bank of a Palestinian teenager.

In response, Israel's foreign ministry summoned Chilean ambassador Jorge Carvajal for what it called a reprimand at a meeting where, it said, "Israel's response will be made clear."

The dispute began on Thursday when Chilean foreign minister Antonia Urrejola informed newly appointed Israeli ambassador Gil Artzyeli that Chilean President Gabriel Boric was postponing a meeting to accept his credentials until October.

"That's because today is a sensitive day due to the death of a minor," a spokesperson from Chile's ministry of foreign affairs said in a text message, referring to the death of Odai Trad Salah, the 17-year-old Palestinian boy that day.

Salah was shot in the head by Israeli forces in the village of Kufr Dan near the occupied West Bank city of Jenin, becoming the 149th Palestinian to be killed by Israel this year.

Israel assailed the snub on Friday with its foreign ministry labelling it "puzzling and unprecedented behaviour" and adding in its statement: "This seriously harms the relations between the two countries."

On Thursday, Artzyeli, the new ambassador, sought to ease tensions following what he said was an "extensive" meeting where Chilean authorities repeatedly apologised. "Being an Israeli and a Jew my people have seen worse things in the last 4,000 years," he told reporters in Santiago. "We're going to overcome this incident for the good of Chile, the good of Israel and our bilateral relations."

Left-leaning Boric has frequently spoken up against Israel and its military operations. In a television interview last year, Boric, who became Chile's president in March, was asked if he maintained his earlier stated opinion that Israel is a "genocidal and murderous" state. "I maintain it," he answered.

In 2019, Chile's Jewish community sent Boric a jar of honey to celebrate the Jewish New Year. Boric responded on Twitter: "I appreciate the gesture but they could start by asking Israel to return the illegally occupied Palestinian territory."

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