

Israel refuses visas to UN officials after speech on Gaza war -- to 'teach them a lesson'



United Nations, October 25 (RHC)-- Israel will refuse visas to United Nations officials, its ambassador to the UN has said, as the country's spat with the international organisation deepens. Gilad Erdan made the statement on Wednesday, according to Israeli media, as the fallout from the UN chief's speech at the Security Council the previous day continues.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres indirectly criticised Israel for ordering the evacuation of civilians from the north to the south of the Gaza Strip. He also said Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7 did not happen "in a vacuum" as the Palestinians have been "subjected to 56 years of suffocating occupation."

Many countries welcomed Guterres's "very balanced approach", reported Al Jazeera's Gabriel Elizondo from New York. However, Israel was "furious" and its officials called on the UN chief to resign.

Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, who was at the debate, “was so upset”, said Elizondo, “that he cancelled a meeting with the secretary-general that was supposed to happen Tuesday afternoon”.

“It is really unusual to see this sort of reaction against the secretary-general,” Elizondo added.

“Due to his [Guterres’s] remarks, we will refuse to issue visas to UN representatives,” Erdan told Army Radio. “We have already refused a visa for Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths. The time has come to teach them a lesson.”

Erdan said on X, formerly Twitter, that the UN chief has “expressed an understanding for terrorism and murder” with this speech.

Later, Guterres posted an extract from his speech on X in an apparent bid to show he has criticised both Hamas and Israel for the crisis in Gaza.

“The grievances of the Palestinian people cannot justify the horrific attacks by Hamas. Those horrendous attacks cannot justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people,” he wrote.

The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has condemned Israel’s call for the UN secretary-general to resign, describing it as an “unprovoked attack”.

In a post on X, the Palestinian ministry described Israel’s position as an “extension” of its “disrespect and lack of commitment” to the UN, its charter, and resolutions regarding Palestine.

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