

South Africans demand permanent Gaza ceasefire during pro-Palestine march

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Demonstrators march across the Mandela Bridge downtown Johannesburg, South Africa, Wednesday, November 29, 2023 [Jerome Delay/AP Photo]

Johannesburg, November 30 (RHC)-- Members of South African political parties and civil society organisations marched through the streets of Johannesburg on Wednesday demanding a permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip as they marked the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Rival political parties including the ruling African National Congress and the left-wing opposition Economic Freedom Fighters were among many demonstrators who marched across the Nelson Mandela Bridge to protest against Israel's military offensive in Gaza against Hamas.

Other protests were planned around South Africa, where many including President Cyril Ramaphosa have compared Israel's policies in Gaza and the West Bank with South Africa's past apartheid regime of racial segregation. Decades of white-minority rule ended in South Africa with elections in 1994.

Veteran anti-apartheid activist Ronnie Kasrils called for the boycott and isolation of Israel over the current war. "All over the world, millions and millions are coming out and saying no, no, no. We will boycott and isolate Israel until it hurts them, and we stand by the Palestinian people fully, with our total support," Kasrils told the crowd.

For years, African giant has been critical of Israel's continued occupation of Gaza. Last week, a majority of South African lawmakers voted in favour of a motion calling for the closure of Israel's embassy and the suspension of diplomatic relations. The motion was sponsored by EFF lawmakers but heavily backed by the governing ANC. It was opposed by members of the centrist, white-majority, largely pro-Israel Democratic Alliance.

The action is largely symbolic because it will be up to President Cyril Ramaphosa's government to implement it or not. It came after Israel recalled its ambassador to South Africa following remarks by South African leaders who accused Israel of committing genocide and referred Israel's attacks on Gaza to the International Criminal Court.

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