

Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas tells Turkish parliament he will go to Gaza



**Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas addresses the Turkish parliament in Ankara
[Cagla Gurdogan/Reuters]**

Ankara, August 15 (RHC)-- Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has promised to go to the besieged Gaza Strip, saying he will stand by the Palestinian people even if it costs him his life.

Speaking to Turkey's Grand National Assembly on Thursday as the Palestinian death toll from the Israeli war on Gaza surpassed 40,000, Abbas decried the "silence of the international community" in the face of atrocities committed by Israel.

"I have decided to head to the Gaza Strip along with all the brothers from the Palestinian leadership," Abbas said. "I will work with all my power so that all of us are standing with our people to stop this barbaric aggression even if that would cost us our life. Our life is not more valuable than that of the smallest child in Gaza."

The Palestinian territory is under a suffocating Israeli blockade. The Palestinian side of the Rafah crossing, the gateway between Egypt and Gaza, has been under Israeli control for months.

"It's either victory or martyrdom," the 88-year-old Palestinian leader, told Turkish lawmakers.

Abbas and his aides have been critical of Hamas, a rival to his Fatah movement. But there have been ongoing efforts to bring the two sides together to achieve Palestinian unity.

Last month, Fatah and Hamas representatives met in Beijing for reconciliation talks. Abbas also called for unity and patience after the killing of Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran in late July, calling the assassination a "cowardly act."

Hamas has been in control of Gaza since 2005 while the Palestinian Authority administers limited self-rule in parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

"Gaza is an integral part of the unified Palestinian state. There will be no state in Gaza alone. The Palestinian people will not be broken and will never surrender," Abbas said on Thursday.

"We will rebuild Gaza and heal the wounds of our people with the support of the Arab and Islamic nations and global allies, within the framework of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital."

The Palestinian president thanked his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, for what he called principled and courageous support for the Palestinian people. He also called for accountability for Israel's abuses in Gaza, where the Israeli military has displaced nearly the entire population and turned large parts of the territory into rubble.

"The murderers and war criminals will not escape punishment, and we will continue our struggle and fight to achieve justice in Palestine," he said.

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