

Palestinian top diplomat slams moves to normalize relations with Israel

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Ramallah, May 17 (RHC)-- Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki has criticised countries that moved to normalize relations with Israel last year, as violence escalates between the Palestinians and Israeli forces.

“Normalization and running towards this colonial Israeli system without achieving peace and ending the Israeli occupation of Arab and Palestinian lands represents support for the apartheid regime and participation in its crimes,” Maliki told an emergency meeting of foreign ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation on Sunday.

“This colonial occupation must be confronted, dismantled, ended, and banned. The recently accelerated normalisation will not have an impact on the sentiments of the Arab world or change their assessment.”

There has also been widespread violence across Israel between Israeli Jews and Palestinian citizens of Israel amid the escalation. This has put Arab countries that have normalised ties with Israel -- Sudan, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain -- in a particularly embarrassing position, having premised their peace accord with Tel Aviv on the notion that normalised relations would serve in the interest of the Palestinian cause.

The OIC’s emergency meeting was hosted by Saudi Arabia, which has not formally normalised ties with Israel but is known to maintain clandestine relations. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan called on the international community to take “urgent action” to halt the Israeli military operation and to revive peace talks aimed at securing a two-state solution. “Preserving Jerusalem is the responsibility of all of us,” he said.

The recent bloodshed, just as Muslims were celebrating the end of the holy month of Ramadan, has put Israel’s new Arab partners on the back foot, prompting them to turn to critical rhetoric less than a year after they signed normalisation agreements.

The so-called “Abraham Accords” swept away decades of consensus, and were condemned as “treason” by Palestinian leaders who feared they undercut their demands for a homeland. They were struck at the urging of then US President Donald Trump, who hailed the “dawn of a new Middle East” as his son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner dismissed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a mere “real estate dispute”.

Reem Al Hashimy, the UAE minister of state for international cooperation, spoke at the meeting but did not address the criticism, only calling for a halt to the violence and not specifically blaming Israel for the troubles.

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