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United Nations, May 17 (RHC)-- Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki on Sunday accused Israel of committing “war crimes” in its nearly weeklong offensive on Gaza as he urged international pressure at a United Nations Security Council session.

“Some may not want to use these words – war crimes and crimes against humanity – but they know they are true,” al-Maliki told the virtual session on the crisis on Sunday. He also renewed the charge – angrily denounced by Israel – that Tel Aviv is pursuing a policy of “apartheid” against the Palestinians.

“Act now to end the aggression. Act now so freedom can prevail -- not apartheid,” he told the Security Council. But the council meeting, already delayed by Israel’s ally the United States, resulted in little action.

Al-Maliki – part of the Palestinian Authority, not Hamas, the group that controls the Gaza Strip and has been firing rockets into Israel – voiced regret over Israeli deaths but urged the Security Council to examine the power balance. Israel “is an occupying colonial power. Any assessment of the situation that fails to take into account this fundamental fact is biased,” al-Maliki said.

Gilad Erdan, Israel’s ambassador to the UN, meanwhile blasted Hamas’s rocket attacks on Israel as premeditated. “It was completely premeditated by Hamas in order to gain political power,” said Erdan.

He said the Hamas had escalated tensions due to internal Palestinian political manoeuvres after the PA President Mahmoud Abbas delayed long-awaited elections. “Do you really believe that this property dispute is what caused Hamas to launch these large-scale attacks on the people of Israel?” Erdan said.

And the Israeli representative thanked the United States, which had delayed the UN session, and called on the world body to condemn Hamas... and not Israel.

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