

Israeli diplomat expelled from the African Union Summit

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Addis Ababa, February 19 (RHC)-- The Israeli Foreign Ministry's deputy director general for Africa, Sharon Bar-Li, was expelled on Saturday from the 36th session of the African Union (AU) Assembly of Heads of State and Government.

The spokesman for the chairman of the African Union Commission, Ebba Kalondo, explained that the measure was taken because Bar-Li was not the official duly accredited by Tel Aviv to the event, who should have been the Israeli ambassador to the African Union, Aleli Admasu. The Israeli diplomat was respectfully but decisively led out of the room by the event's security.

Israel blamed the incident on South Africa and Algeria, accusing those two nations of holding the AU hostage and calling them "extremist states controlled by Iran." However, the South African delegation rejected this accusation as baseless.

Vincent Magwenya, spokesman for South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, said that Israel must substantiate its claims when accusing other countries. For his part, Clayson Monyela, head of public diplomacy at the South African Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told reporters that until the AU makes a decision on whether to grant Israel observer status, it cannot have the country present under that status at the plenary. So, he emphasized, it's not about South Africa or Algeria: "it's a matter of principle."

The AU summit, constituted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, is the supreme decision-making and policy-making body whose responsibility is to determine policies, set priorities and adopt its annual agenda.

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