

World leaders attend Cairo peace summit to call for ceasefire and end to violence in Gaza

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Cairo, October 22 (RHC)-- Leaders and top officials from more than a dozen countries gathered in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, for a conference to discuss ways to “de-escalate” the Israel-Hamas war amid growing fears of a wider Middle East conflict.

Dubbed the Cairo Summit for Peace, representatives from countries including Jordan, France, Germany, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, the United States, Qatar and South Africa attended the one-day meeting on Saturday, together with United Nations and European Union officials.

In his opening remarks, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi invited leaders to come to an agreement for a road map to end the “humanitarian catastrophe” in the Gaza Strip and revive a path to peace between Israel and the Palestinians. The plan’s goals included the delivery of aid to Gaza and agreeing to a ceasefire, followed by negotiations leading to a two-state solution, he said.

“All civilian lives matter,” Jordan’s King Abdullah said, addressing the summit. “The relentless bombing campaign under way in Gaza as we speak is cruel and unconscionable on every level. It is collective punishment of a besieged and helpless people. It is a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. It is a war crime.”

“Anywhere else, attacking civilian infrastructure and deliberately starving an entire population of food, water, electricity and basic necessities would be condemned. Accountability would be enforced ... but not in Gaza,” he added.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas attended the summit and asked for humanitarian corridors to be opened. He also said Palestinians would not leave. “We will remain on our land.”

The absence of any representative from the Israeli side, and any senior U.S. official, has dampened expectations for what the summit can achieve. Al Jazeera’s diplomatic editor James Bays said that while it is good for these countries to propose a road map out of this crisis, “Is Israel going to listen to that road map?”

“Israel is not represented. It’s Israeli generals and the Israeli prime minister and the Israeli war cabinet who have the decisions on what to do militarily, and you see – as the speeches have been going on – fresh bombardment of Gaza [is taking place],” Bays noted.

The summit takes place as Israel readies a ground assault on Gaza, after weeks of aerial attacks following the October 7 attack by Hamas that killed 1,400 people in Israel. More than 4,200 Palestinians have been killed in Israel’s counteroffensive, amid a growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

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