

Abbas joins Arab leaders in calling for Gaza truce in meeting with Blinken

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Ramallah, November 5 (RHC)-- Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas told Antony Blinken there must be an immediate ceasefire to the war in Gaza during a meeting with the top U.S. diplomat in the occupied West Bank on Sunday, according to Abbas' spokesperson, adding to a growing chorus of Arab leaders stressing the need for a truce as the death toll in Gaza approaches 10,000.

Al Jazeera's Bernard Smith, reporting from Ramallah, said the meeting between Blinken and Abbas lasted less than an hour.

"There were no statements at the end of the meeting from either parties. What we know is Abbas would have asked for a ceasefire like other Arab leaders have already asked. But Blinken has rebuffed these requests and would have done the same with Abbas," Smith said.

The mounting casualties in Gaza have put the U.S.'s diplomatic efforts under further scrutiny by its Arab allies, who have grown increasingly frustrated by the worsening humanitarian situation in the besieged Palestinian territory.

Israel, which continues with its military offensive on Gaza, killed more than 50 people in air raids late on Saturday.

During a news conference in Amman, Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi stressed that Arab countries want an immediate ceasefire, warning that "the whole region is sinking in a sea of hatred that will define generations to come. "We don't accept that this is self-defence," Safadi said, referring to Israel's monthlong assault on Gaza that has killed at least 9,488 Palestinians, more than a third of them children.

"It cannot be justified under any pretext and it will not bring Israel security, it will not bring the region peace."

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, whose country has been acting as the sole conduit for foreigners to escape Gaza and for aid to get in, called for an "immediate and comprehensive ceasefire."

"It is our view now that a ceasefire would simply leave Hamas in place, able to regroup and repeat," what it did on October 7, said Blinken, referring to the group's surprise attack into southern Israel that killed some 1,400 Israelis, mostly civilians, according to Israeli officials.

Blinken tried to walk a diplomatic tightrope during his third visit to the region within a month, pushing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to accept a temporary "humanitarian pause" and urging for the protection of Palestinian civilians, while also contending with Arab leaders who are urging for a full ceasefire.

Blinken's "humanitarian pause" call was deemed too weak by Arab leaders, and dismissed by Netanyahu who insisted Israel's offensive must continue at "full force."

Speaking about his visit with Blinken, prior to the U.S. secretary of state's meeting with Arab officials, Netanyahu said in a televised statement on Saturday: "I made clear that we are continuing full force and that Israel refuses a temporary ceasefire..."

Israel seemingly drove this message home by bombing multiple United Nations-run schools and refugee centres during Blinken's visit. The most recent – a strike on the Maghazi refugee camp in central Gaza early on Sunday – killed at least 47 people.

"If this crisis continues, especially [on] the humanitarian side, and if this crisis brings us back full circle to the old containment policy of pre-October 7, I think the American role here, forget right or wrong, but it will not be seen as effective," said Anwar Gargash, diplomatic adviser to the UAE president.

Al Jazeera's political analyst Marwan Bishara argued that Blinken's calls for a "humanitarian pause" without a more serious push to rein in Israel were hollow. "What does a humanitarian pause mean," asked Bishara. "It means you give us a few minutes in order to start bombing again. How is that helpful? How does that bring peace? How does that re-establish credibility? How does that end the bloodshed?"

“When Blinken says ‘no ceasefire’ again and again and again, he is saying ‘yes’ to war,” Bishara added. “Blinken has embraced and parroted the Israeli position that we are going with the war until the end.”

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