

*Israeli foreign ministry says
Brazil's ambassador summoned
for reprimand over remarks
described as disgraceful*

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Tel Aviv, February 19 (RHC)-- Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has accused Israel of committing "genocide" against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and compared its war on Gaza with Adolf Hitler's campaign to exterminate Jewish people.

"What's happening in the Gaza Strip isn't a war, it's a genocide," Lula told reporters in Addis Ababa where he was attending an African Union summit on Sunday.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said he would summon Brazil's ambassador for a reprimand over the remarks. "No one will compromise Israel's right to defend itself," Katz said on X, adding that the envoy would be summoned on Monday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described the comments as "disgraceful and grave."

"This is a trivialisation of the Holocaust and an attempt to attack the Jewish people and the right of Israel to self-defence. Drawing comparisons between Israel and the Nazis and Hitler is to cross a red line," Netanyahu said in a statement.

Speaking in Addis Ababa on Sunday, Lula strongly criticized Western countries' recent decisions to halt aid to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, after Israel accused some of its employees of involvement in the Hamas-led attack.

Lula, who met with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh Saturday on the sidelines of the African Union summit, has said Brazil will increase its own contribution to the agency and urged other countries to do the same.

"When I see the rich world announce that it's halting its contributions to humanitarian aid for the Palestinians, I just imagine how big these people's political awareness is and how big the spirit of solidarity in their hearts is," Lula said. "We need to stop being small when we need to be big."

He reiterated his call for a two-state solution to the conflict, with Palestine "definitively recognized as a full and sovereign state."

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