

Israel revokes diplomatic status of Norwegian envoys

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Tel Aviv, August 8 (RHC)-- Israel has revoked the diplomatic status of eight Norwegian diplomats serving the occupied Palestinian territory. "There is a price for anti-Israel behaviour," said Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz on Thursday, citing Norway's recognition of Palestinian statehood and its backing of an International Criminal Court (ICC) case implicating Israeli leaders in alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity as reasons for the move.

The Norwegian ambassador was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem on Thursday, where he was informed that the diplomats, all based in Tel Aviv, would have their accreditation revoked in seven days and their visas annulled in three months.

“This is an extreme act that primarily affects our ability to help the Palestinian population,” said Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs Espen Barth Eide in a statement, warning that the decision would have “consequences” for its relationship with the Israeli government. Norway is still considering its response to the situation.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Thursday that mentioned “serious statements by senior Norwegian officials” that were viewed as anti-Israeli. In an official note delivered to the Norwegian embassy in Tel Aviv, the ministry also accused Norway of “one-sided policies and statements” since the October 7 Hamas-led attack in southern Israel that preceded Israel’s offensive in the Gaza Strip.

Spain, Ireland and Norway announced their decision to recognise a Palestinian state back in May, drawing a strong rebuke from Israel whose leaders have repeatedly spoken out against Palestinian statehood.

Israel had reacted furiously, accusing all three of “rewarding terrorism” and immediately withdrawing its ambassadors to Ireland, Norway and Spain. It also ordered Spain’s consulate in Jerusalem to stop offering consular services to Palestinians from June 1, with Katz saying at the time that it was a “punitive” measure.

In May, the chief prosecutor of the ICC, Karim Khan, applied for arrest warrants against top Israeli and Hamas leaders for alleged war crimes.

Khan announced his office had “reasonable grounds” to believe that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant bore “criminal responsibility” for “war crimes and crimes against humanity”.

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