

Extraordinary BRICS summit

Raisi: Gaza symbol of West's moral decline

South Africa's Ramaphosa accuses Israel of war crimes, 'genocide'

International Desk

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, in an extraordinary summit of the BRICS group of nations on Tuesday, made proposals to stop Israel's crimes in Gaza, stating that the United States has made all international organizations ineffective.

Upon a proposal by Iran, South Africa on Tuesday hosted a virtual meeting of BRICS on Gaza, during which its president, Cyril Ramaphosa, accused Israel of war crimes and "genocide" in the besieged strip. A group of major emerging economies – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – hold the summit aimed at drawing up a common response to the Israel-Hamas conflict. Addressing the meeting, the Iranian president considered Gaza a symbol of the West's moral decline, saying, "Comprehensive support from the US and the West for genocide and child killings in Gaza is worse than anything."

As of Monday, more than 13,300 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, more than 5,600 of them children, according to the territory's Hamas-run Health Ministry.

Referring to the inability of the United Nations Security Council to fulfill its mission of promoting peace and security and the failure to issue a binding resolution for a cease-fire, Raisi said it is necessary for the BRICS member states to adopt a binding resolution in the General Assembly within the framework and mechanism of the alliance for peace, and to halt the crimes against the people of Gaza.

Emphasizing his second proposal, he highlighted, "The continuous attacks by the Zionist regime on hospitals, medical centers, religious sites, and the massacre of women, children, doctors, nurses, and journalists are all acts of terrorism, and this fabricated regime should be identified as a terrorist regime, with its military

recognized as a terrorist organization".

Raisi also said that his country supports the actions of some countries in taking Israel's crimes of occupation in Gaza to the International Criminal Court.

In another proposal, he said, "Collective action by BRICS members to break the siege of Gaza and establish a permanent and secure path for sending humanitarian aid to Gaza is essential".

Pointing to the ongoing crimes and racist nature of Israel, Raisi said free nations expect all governments, especially BRICS members, to swiftly prioritize complete cessation of their political, economic, and military relations with the Zionist regime.

"The continuation of interactions with the regime in the military and economic fields means helping to continue the crime and killing of women and children, which is the subject of condemnation and



blame of all nations," he added.

Meanwhile, as the South African president chaired the summit, he said, "The collective punishment of Palestinian civilians through the unlawful use of force by Israel is a war crime."

"The deliberate denial of medicine, fuel, food and water to the residents



of Gaza is tantamount to genocide," he said.

Putin for political settlement

In televised comments to the virtual BRICS summit, Russian President Vladimir Putin also called for a political solution to the conflict and said regional states and members of the BRICS group of coun-



Palestinians walk at the site of Israeli strikes on houses, in Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip, on November 21, 2023.
● ABED SABAH/REUTERS

tries could be involved in efforts to reach such a settlement.

Putin once again blamed the Middle East crisis on the failure of US diplomacy

in the region.

"We call for the joint efforts of the international community aimed at de-escalating the situation, a cease-fire and finding a political solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. And the BRICS states and countries of the region could play a key role in this work," Putin said.

He said it was "terrible" that Palestinian children were dying in large numbers, adding that the sight of operations being performed on children without anaesthetics "evokes special feelings".

"Due to the sabotage of UN decisions, which clearly provide for the creation and peaceful coexistence of two independent and sovereign states – Israel and Palestine – more than one generation of Palestinians has been brought up in an atmosphere of injustice towards their people, and the Israelis cannot fully guarantee the security of their state," Putin said.

'Perfect storm for tragedy'

Also, the United Nations warned on Tuesday that fuel shortages and worsening sanitation in the Gaza Strip are shaping up to be the perfect storm for tragedy through the spread of disease.

UNICEF, the UN children's agency, said there was a serious threat of a mass disease outbreak in the besieged Palestinian territory.

"Without enough fuel, we will see the collapse of sanitation services. So, we have then, on top of the mortars and the bombs, a perfect storm for the spread of disease.

"It's a perfect storm for tragedy," UNICEF spokesman James Elder told a press briefing in Geneva. Speaking via video-link from Cairo, Elder said the potential for wider loss of life in Gaza was being significantly exacerbated because an estimated 800,000 children in the enclave are displaced from their homes.



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi addresses an extraordinary virtual summit of the BRICS group of nations on November 21, 2023.
● president.ir

Truce deal is 'close'

Meanwhile, the chief of Hamas said on Tuesday that the Palestinian resistance group was near a truce agreement with Israel, even as the deadly assault on Gaza continued and rockets were being fired into Israel.

Hamas officials were "close to reaching a truce agreement" with Israel, and the group has delivered its response to Qatari mediators, Ismail Haniyeh said in a statement sent to Reuters by his aide.

Mediator Qatar also on Tuesday confirmed that negotiations to free prisoners seized in Hamas' October 7 attacks on Israel are at their "closest point" to a deal and have reached the "final stage".

**Arab countries need ...**

Arab countries also have the potential to pressure Israel and the US, but they do not utilize this potential. A better approach would have been for the Arab countries' delegation to travel to Washington, present their case to the US government, and issue a warning that Israel must accept a ceasefire. If the US declines to take

the required action, Arab countries have to take practical measures and exert pressure on Israel and the US. Unfortunately, Arab countries do not even verbally threaten Israel and the US. The threat of oil and economic sanctions and the reduction or severance of political ties with Israel could be impactful and disrupt global oil markets.

However, Arab countries seem unwilling to take practical actions to pressure Israel and the US. Such trips to China and other countries apart from the US will not yield any results for the Palestinian people. The correct destination for diplomatic efforts is Washington, albeit with a serious agenda and a warning.

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