

Palestinian foreign minister calls on African Union to overturn Israel's observer status

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Heavy construction equipment is used to sift through rubble to uncover valuables before it is transported away from the scene of a building destroyed in an airstrike prior to a ceasefire that halted an 11-day war on the Gaza Strip by Israel. (Photo: AP)

Addis Abba, October 15 (RHC)-- Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki has called on the African Union (AU) to reverse a decision by the pan-African bloc to grant the occupying Israeli regime observer status at the continental organization, urging the AU to stand by Palestine and reject a tacit endorsement

of present-day colonialism amid Israeli war crimes.

"The attempt by some to support Israel's application for observer status in the African organization has rightly provoked sentiments of shock and rejection by those who wish to see Africa preserve and defend its proud legacy of successfully defeating racist colonialism and oppression," Maliki said in an open letter addressed to the African Union's Executive Council as the bloc met in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Abba on Thursday for the 39th session of the executive council.

Maliki urged the AU to listen to African leaders who "vehemently protest attempts to override the African Union's Charter and founding principles as well as circumvent the will of the peoples of the continent by fast-tracking a unilateral decision to grant Israel an observer status at the African Union."

"Today, I write so that you may hear from the Palestinian people, who have historically and unwaveringly stood on the solid foundation of support to our African sisters and brothers. I write to ask that you stand by Palestine and your peoples' legacy and reject a tacit endorsement of present-day colonialism," the letter added.

Maliki told the bloc that Israel sees "international law and human rights as impediments and continue to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity have long forfeited any entitlement to have a seat at the African table."

Earlier this month, three international advocacy organizations - the UK-based International Centre of Justice for Palestinians, Democracy for the Arab World Now (Dawn) in the U.S. and The Legal Resources Center in South Africa - urged the AU to suspend Israel's observer status, citing its treatment of the Palestinians.

"The well-documented crimes and violations of such an oppressive nature that the human dignity and independence of the Palestinian people is decisively suppressed plainly demonstrates that Israel does not embody the values and ideals that the African Union supports and aspires, and that the AU Commission's decision - made without considering the serious concerns of nearly half its membership - was in error," British lawmaker Crispin Blunt, who also serves as director of the International Centre of Justice for Palestinians, said.

Last month, a group of international lawyers, researchers and activists filed a complaint with the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, denouncing the recent decision of the African Union to grant Israel an observer status at the regional bloc, and seeking its revocation.

"This complaint is brought against the decision of the African Union taken at the end of July 2021 granting observer status to Israel," read a 200-page document petitioning the AU's decision.

Experts say Israel's new observer status is largely seen as part of the Tel Aviv regime's continued effort to normalize ties in Africa. Several African countries, including Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, and Algeria, had already opposed Israel's accreditation. They say AU member states were not consulted and the decision is in opposition to the body's support for the Palestinian cause.

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