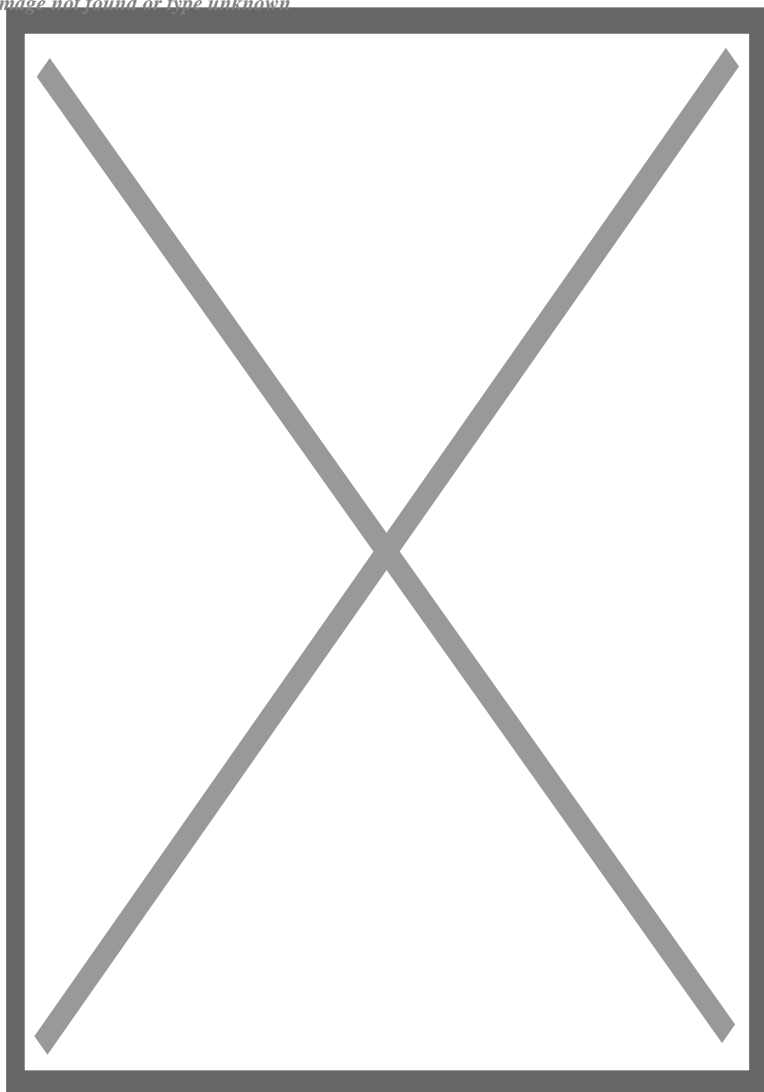


Spanish prime minister says Israel disdains humanitarian law, calls on EU to recognize Palestine

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Madrid, December 1 (RHC)-- Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez says given the number of casualties among civilians, including a huge number of children, in the besieged Gaza Strip during Israel's weeks-long war, he has "serious doubt" that Tel Aviv respects international humanitarian law.

In an interview with Spanish state-owned broadcaster TVE on Thursday, Sanchez reiterated that Israel's military action in the densely-populated strip is unacceptable. "The footage we are seeing and the growing numbers of children dying, I have serious doubt [Israel] is complying with international humanitarian law," he said. "What we are seeing in Gaza is not acceptable."

Sanchez also said the European Union should recognize a Palestinian state since this would help end the conflict and "stabilize" the region. "It is obvious that we must find a political solution to put an end to this crisis and this solution requires, in my opinion, the recognition of the Palestinian state."

"It is in Europe's interest to address this issue out of moral conviction because what we are seeing in Gaza is not acceptable", and also for "a geopolitical objective -- to stabilize a region", he added.

When he was sworn in for a new term this month, Sanchez said his foreign policy priority would be to "work in Europe and in Spain to recognize the Palestinian state." If there is no consensus among the EU's 27 member states, Sanchez has said Madrid does not rule out unilaterally recognizing a Palestinian state.

A handful of smaller European countries have taken the step, mainly east European nations like Hungary, Poland and Romania that did so before they joined the EU.

Spain's parliament voted in 2014 in favor of a resolution calling for recognition of Palestine as a state. The vote was non-binding, however, and there has been no follow-up.

"The situation has changed," Sanchez told TVE, adding that Arab nations did not understand the EU's position. "During all these years, we have seen how Israel systematically occupied Palestinian territory," he added in a reference to Israeli settlement expansion.

Israel's top diplomat said he was recalling the regime's envoy to Madrid over what he called "outrageous remarks" by the Spanish prime minister questioning the legality of Israel's military invasion of Gaza.

"Because of the outrageous remarks by the Spanish prime minister, who again repeated baseless claims, I have decided to summon the Israeli ambassador in Spain for consultations," Foreign Minister Eli Cohen wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

The new spat came less than a week after Israel expressed anger with Sanchez and his Belgian counterpart, Alexander De Croo, who demanded the regime stop its massacre of civilians holed up in Gaza.

Tel Aviv also summoned ambassadors of both European countries over their remarks voiced at a joint press conference on the Egyptian side of the Rafah border crossing on November 24th. Cohen claimed the remarks by Sanchez and De Croo repeated "false claims" and "gave terrorism a boost."

In response, Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares said Cohen's allegations were "false, unacceptable and out of place."

Sanchez on Thursday said European countries should discuss the recognition of a Palestinian state.

Israel launched the war on Gaza on October 7, after the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas waged the surprise Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the occupying entity in response to the regime's decades-

long campaign of devastation against Palestinians.

According to the Gaza-based health ministry, over 15,000 Palestinians, including more than 6,000 children, were killed in Israeli strikes during the 49 days of war. Many more dead people are feared to be under the rubble.

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