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The Effect of the Gaps between North and South on the Crisis in Gaza

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Outside of most of the Western world, the international community is largely unified in its call for a ceasefire and an end to military operations as far as the current violence on the Palestinian-Israeli front is concerned. The resulting gap between the “North” and the “South” thus appears to be widening, which could impact the overall momentum of the crisis itself.

The position of the Latin American countries is quite illustrative in this regard. Recently, Latin American countries have scaled back their relations with Israel, with many of the countries recalling their ambassadors and Bolivia even severing its ties with Israel. Countries like Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, and Brazil have each called for a ceasefire. Taken together, such a combination has the potential to also lead to a shift in the Western position regarding the conflict.

On October 31, Bolivia announced that it was severing diplomatic relations with Israel, [citing](#) “crimes against humanity” in Gaza. Bolivian President Luis Arce [stated](#), “We reject the war crimes being committed in Gaza. We support international initiatives to guarantee humanitarian aid, in compliance with international law.” Bolivia’s minister of the presidency, who is acting foreign minister, María Nela Prada, also [accused](#) Israel of “committing crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip against the Palestinian people” and called on Israel to “cease attacks in the Gaza Strip that have already resulted in thousands of civilian casualties and the forced displacement of Palestinians.” Moreover, Freddy Mamani, Bolivia’s deputy foreign minister, [said](#) the decision to end ties came in “repudiation and condemnation of the aggressive and disproportionate Israeli military offensive in the Gaza Strip and its threat to international peace and security.”

Bolivia previously cut ties with Israel in 2009 while under the government of then-President Evo Morales, also due to Israel’s actions in Gaza. Relations were then restored in 2020 under the government of interim President Jeanine Anez. Former President Morales supported the current decision to end diplomatic ties, [pushing](#) Bolivia to “declare the state of Israel as a terrorist state and file a complaint with the International Criminal Court.”

Shortly after Bolivia’s announcement, Colombia recalled its ambassador to Israel, with Colombia’s president, Gustavo Petro, [stating](#), “If Israel does not stop the massacre of the Palestinian people, we cannot remain there.” President Petro has also compared Israel’s siege of Gaza to the actions of Nazi Germany. Moreover, the Colombian government [expressed](#) “its strongest rejection of the actions of the Israeli security forces in Gaza in areas densely populated by civilians.” In response, Israel suspended exports of military equipment to Colombia, which in turn led President Petro to [state](#) that “if we must suspend relations with Israel, then that is what we will do.” The Colombian president doubled down by [calling](#) Israel’s actions a “genocide,” saying “They do it to remove the Palestinian people from Gaza and take it over.” Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva echoed the statement, [saying](#), “What we have now is the insanity of Israel’s prime minister, who wants to wipe out the Gaza Strip.”

A few hours later, Chile also [recalled](#) its ambassador “in the face of the unacceptable violations of international humanitarian law committed by Israel in the Gaza Strip.” Chilean President Gabriel Boric [explained](#) that he recalled the ambassador to address the “unacceptable violations of



international humanitarian law” Israel was committing in Gaza. He further condemned Israel’s actions, [stating](#) that they constitute “collective punishment of the civilian Palestinian population in Gaza,” and “do not respect fundamental norms of international law, as the more than 8,000 civilian victims, most of them women and children, demonstrate.” The statements were well received in Chile, which has the world’s largest Palestinian population outside the Middle East.

In addition to the three countries, Honduras also recalled its ambassador to Israel for consultations [in light of](#) “the serious humanitarian situation the civilian Palestinian population is suffering in the Gaza Strip.” Antonio Garcia, the Vice Foreign Minister, [stated](#) that the decision is a component of a variety of prospective diplomatic measures and represents the government’s “concerns over the indiscriminate killing of the Palestinian civilian population.”

The position put forward by Latin American countries underscores a growing unease with the policies pursued by the United States and Europe and an assessment that Israel’s response to the attacks by Hamas on October 7 is not only disproportionate but puts into real jeopardy the security of the Middle East as a whole. It is further a reflection of the existing gap between how the conflict is seen by mostly Western countries of the northern hemisphere and the rest of the international community or the so-called “Global South.” There is a clear divide that threatens to widen if not appropriately managed.

The question now is whether positions such as those articulated by Latin American countries are also having an impact on leaders in the US and Europe to take on a more balanced role. The initial evidence suggests a subtle change in perspectives, although this is far from an alignment that would be needed to close the current gap.

In fact, the US and Europe have begun to [pivot](#) somewhat from unconditional support for Israel’s operations to focusing on humanitarian aid for Palestinians. In his meeting with the Israeli Prime Minister, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken [pushed](#) for “humanitarian pauses,” saying, “we need to do more to protect Palestinian civilians.” The shift from both public and private pressure from US, European, and Latin American countries was intensified following the bombing of the Jabalia refugee camp.

The shift was also evident in the joint statement of the G7 members following intensive meetings in Tokyo, where the foreign ministers [called](#) for “humanitarian pauses to facilitate urgently needed assistance, civilian movement and release of hostages.” While the statement [reiterated](#) support for Israel’s right to self-defense, pushing for “urgent action” to help Palestinian civilians brought a much-needed balance back to the table. The joint statement also condemned “the rise in extremist settler violence committed against Palestinians,” which the ministers said is “unacceptable, undermines security in the West Bank, and threatens prospects for a lasting peace.”

It is important to note that for the moment these changes reflect the West’s change in rhetoric only rather than substance. For instance, despite growing protests across numerous cities in the US, decreasing approval rates by Arab-Americans in crucial swing states, and officials resigning from the State Department over the Biden administration’s handling of the conflict, the US president [shows](#) no sign of denouncing the operations in Gaza or calling for an immediate ceasefire.



However, the more pressure from the wider international community, the more likely the gaps between the two sides will begin to narrow. Finding a middle ground is now crucial to prevent more escalation and additional civilian casualties. This includes the insistence on delivering humanitarian aid and focusing on the political answer in terms of a two-state solution. As the death toll continues to rise, there is an absolute need to activate as many diplomatic channels as possible, with the US and Europe engaging with all allies to defuse the situation and prevent any further escalation.

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