
South African Government condemns latest Violence in Middle East

Pretoria - South African Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad today Monday 28 May 2007 expressed his deep concern about the reports on 25 May 2007 of Israeli military forces attacking various Palestinian cities and towns and the arrests of 41 Palestinians, including the Minister of Education, Dr Alshare, members of the Legislative Council, mayors and ordinary citizens.

Deputy Minister Pahad said such actions, as well as Israel's rejection of the Palestinian offer of a comprehensive, reciprocal ceasefire; its withholding of Palestinian tax revenues for more than a year; its undermining of the PNA security forces; and the destruction of several civil society and security institutions, will only further inflame the situation, which will make it very difficult to achieve a peaceful negotiated solution. This will seriously threaten regional stability and international peace and security. He called on the Israeli military to stop its excessive military actions and create the necessary climate for negotiations to take place.

At the same time, the Deputy Minister also called for an end to all Palestinian rocket attacks into Israel, adding that such attacks were detrimental to the aspirations of the Palestinian people, strongly supported by South Africa, for the establishment of a viable Palestinian State, existing side by side in peace with Israel, within internationally recognised borders. Such rocket attacks only serve as pretext for massive Israeli actions against the Palestinians.

The Deputy Minister called on the international community to act decisively to end the violence and to intensify efforts to find a long term negotiated solution.

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