

Erdogan accuses Israel of 'inhumane attack' in Gaza

Turkish leader says he implored US President Trump to intervene to halt violence on Gaza security fence.



Turkish President and leader of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) Recep Tayyip Erdogan gestures as he delivers a speech during the AK Party's parliamentary group meeting at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) in Ankara on March 20, 2018. (AFP PHOTO / HAKAN GOKTEPE)

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday criticized Israel for what he called its “inhumane attack” in Gaza after mass protests and clashes on Friday along the security fence led to the deaths of 16 Palestinians. The IDF said Saturday that at least 10 of those killed were members of Palestinian terror groups including Hamas.

“I strongly condemn the Israeli government over its inhumane attack,” Erdogan said during a speech in Istanbul.

“Israel will get trapped under the oppression it inflicts in Palestine. We will continue to support our Palestinian sisters and brothers in their rightful cause until the very end,” Erdogan wrote earlier Saturday on social media.

On Friday, some 30,000 Palestinians took part in demonstrations along the Gaza border, during which rioters threw rocks and firebombs at Israeli troops on the other side of the fence, burned tires and scrap wood, sought to breach and damage the security fence, and in one case opened fire at Israeli soldiers.

The Palestinians' march to Gaza's border with Israel on Friday was the largest such demonstration in recent memory, calling for Palestinians to be allowed to return to land that their ancestors fled from in the 1948 War of Independence. It was dubbed the "March of Return."

At previous peace talks, the Palestinians have always demanded, along with sovereignty in the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the Old City, a "right of return" to Israel for Palestinian refugees who left or were forced out of Israel when it was established. The Palestinians demand this right not only for those of the hundreds of thousands of refugees who are still alive — a figure estimated in the low tens of thousands — but also for their descendants, who number in the millions.

No Israeli government would ever be likely to accept this demand, since it would spell the end of Israel as a Jewish-majority state. Israel's position is that Palestinian refugees and their descendants would become citizens of a Palestinian state at the culmination of the peace process, just as Jews who fled or were forced out of Middle Eastern countries by hostile governments became citizens of Israel.



Fatalities from the March 30 violence on the Israel-Gaza border identified by the IDF as members of terror groups. (Israel Defense Forces)

The Hamas-run health ministry in Gaza said over 1,400 people were wounded on Friday, 758 of them by live fire, with the remainder hurt by rubber bullets and tear gas inhalation.

IDF Spokesman Brig. Gen. Ronen Manelis said on Saturday that all those killed were engaged in violence, adding that Gaza health officials exaggerated the number of those wounded and that several dozen at most were injured by live fire while the rest were merely shaken up by tear gas and other riot dispersal means.

Manelis said on Friday evening that the army had faced “a violent, terrorist demonstration at six points” along the fence. He said the IDF used “pinpoint fire” wherever there were attempts to breach or damage the security fence. “All the fatalities were aged 18-30, several of the fatalities were known to us, and at least two of them were members of Hamas commando forces,” he said.



Palestinians gather during a protest near the Gaza Strip border with Israel, in eastern Gaza City, Saturday, March 31, 2018. (AP/ Khalil Hamra)

Erdogan also used the Gaza violence to score political points.

“Have you heard any noteworthy objections to the massacre by Israel that

happened yesterday in Gaza from those who criticize the Afrin operation?" Erdogan demanded.

Turkey on January 20 launched a cross-border operation against the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) in its enclave of Afrin and the city was captured on March 18.

Ankara has come under heavy criticism from opponents and activists over its own operations in northern Syria.



Palestinians carry the body of Hamdan Abu Amsha, said killed a day earlier by Israeli fire during a mass border protest along the security fence, in Beit Hanoun in the northern of Gaza Strip on March 31, 2018. (AFP/ MAHMUD HAMS)

"This is the biggest proof of insincerity of those who fixate on us but say nothing about Israel using heavy weapons to attack people who are protesting on their own lands," Erdogan said, without saying which governments and organizations he meant.

Erdogan on Friday spoke with US President Donald Trump in a call and the Turkish leader said he told Trump: "Aren't you going to intervene here?"

The Turkish leader, a fervent supporter of the Palestinians, often criticizes

Israel's policies but the two sides have increased cooperation since the end of a rift in 2016 caused by Israel's storming in 2010 of a Gaza-bound ship that left 10 Turkish activists dead.



A Palestinian protester slings stones towards Israeli soldiers during clashes with Israeli troops along the Gaza Strip border with Israel, east of Khan Younis, Gaza Strip, Friday, March 30, 2018. (AP/Adel Hana)

The Turkish foreign ministry on Friday accused Israel of using “disproportionate force” against Palestinians during “peaceful protests.”

Source: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/erdogan-accuses-israel-of-inhumane-attack-in-gaza/>

[Disclaimer]