



Ireland, Spain urge EU to review trade relations with Israel

Description

EU : Irish Foreign Minister Micheal Martin called Israel's actions in Gaza "disproportionate," expressing criticism ahead of an EU foreign ministers council meeting on 22 April.

"We believe that the response has been fully disproportionate and has also been, in our view, a breach of humanitarian law in terms of the destruction of Gaza and also in terms of the killing of civilians, innocent men, women, and children," the Irish foreign minister said in a speech ahead of the meeting.

Martin also noted that Ireland and Spain will continue to push for a reassessment of the EU–Israel Association Agreement, which mainly focuses on trade relations with Tel Aviv.

Members of the council were upset with Ireland and Spain's call for review, and EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said that "the Commission has still not answered" the two European states that sent a joint letter asking for review in February.

"We anticipated that," Martin said. "But also the modus operandi by which a review would take place has yet to be determined."

The Irish foreign minister added, "We are of the view in Ireland that humanitarian law has been breached and broken time and time again now, and that the level of civilians dying, women and children, is quite shocking."

Separately, when discussing the agenda for the meeting, Martin said that "it is imperative now that we have an immediate ceasefire [in Gaza], that we have the release of all hostages, and that we get moving and get the humanitarian aid flowing into Gaza as quickly as we possibly can at the scale that is required to deal with the famine situation."

He also noted that he will be traveling to Jordan and Egypt, including the Rafah border.

Spain made its voice heard as an avid critic of Israel's actions during the nearly seven-month-long war on Gaza.

Earlier in April, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez stated that Madrid would recognize Palestinian statehood and hoped that other western nations would follow suit, saying, "We have to seriously consider doing it in the first half of this year."

Spain's foreign minister, Jose Manuel Albares, echoed the prime minister in his separate remarks for the recognition of a Palestinian state.

Albares said, "If we look at the medium and long term if we don't do something differently to how we have been acting in the last decade, we will see this spiral of violence once again. And in order to do that ... we need a real and valuable Palestinian state."

Ireland, Slovenia, and Malta said they would readily recognize Palestinian statehood. Currently, only eight of the 27 EU members recognize Palestine as a state: Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Sweden, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Cyprus.

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Date Created

04/23/2024