



Indian External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar paying a courtesy call on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in Putrajaya on Wednesday. BERNAMA PIC

TWO-STATE SOLUTION

'PALESTINIANS DENIED RIGHT TO HOMELAND'

Indian foreign minister condemns Hamas' attack, but says Israel's response must adhere to international humanitarian law

THARANYA ARUMUGAM
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

INDIAN External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar has acknowledged that Palestinians have been "denied the right to their homeland" amid the Israel-Hamas war.

Jaishankar condemned Hamas' Oct 7 attack on Israel, but emphasised the importance of responses adhering to international humanitarian law, particularly referencing Israel's counter-offensive in Gaza.

"Countries may be justified, at least in their minds, about responding (to attacks). But you cannot have a response that does not take into account international humanitarian law.

"And the fact is, that whatever the rights and wrongs of the issue, there is the underlying matter of Palestinians' rights and the fact that they have been denied a homeland."

He said this in response to a question with the Indian diaspora here on Wednesday.

On Oct 7, Hamas fighters attacked Israel through land, sea and air routes. About 1,200 peo-

ple were killed and some 240 seized and taken as hostages into Gaza, according to Israeli tallies.

Media reports suggested 30 of them are still held hostage.

The attack prompted Israel to launch an all-out attack on Gaza Strip that has killed nearly 32,000 Palestinians, two-thirds of them women and children, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza.

The majority of Gaza's 2.3 million residents have been displaced by Israeli strikes.

India's position on the conflict has been a two-state solution where Palestinians can live in an independent country within secure borders, with due regard to the security needs of Israel.

However, India has drawn criticism on social media for its close ties with Israel, with reports of pro-Palestine protesters in the country being targeted by the Indian government.

Reuters reported on Oct 25, 2023, about a pro-Israeli march in Aligarh city, Uttar Pradesh, with people chanting slogans such as "Down with Palestine, Down with Hamas", which portrayed India as an "anti-Muslim" country, especially in the Muslim world.

Jaishankar, who is on a two-day

official visit to Malaysia starting Wednesday, also addressed the wider implications of conflicts, such as the Russia-Ukraine war.

India's position from the start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, he said, had been that a solution could not be found on the battlefield and that India wanted to find a way of bringing this conflict to an end.

"It's very easy to be sharply judgmental (about India's stance). But look at the complexity of real life.

"We took the position from the start that you're not going to get a solution to this (Russia-Ukraine war) conflict on the battlefield.

"Two years have passed (since the start of the Russia-Ukraine war). Many initially believed a solution could be sought (during that timeframe)."

Today, however, it appeared that optimism had waned, he said.

"If we assess the conflicts unfolding in this day and age, there are no winners.

"At the end of the day every party involved, along with numerous bystanders or other nations, get ruined or affected.

"Our position has been that (we must) find a way of bringing this conflict to an end. In some circles, this (India's stance) was not a popular position at that time.