

Brazil: 'Lula is right, Israel is carrying out a genocide in Gaza'

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"What's happening in the Gaza Strip isn't a war, it's a genocide," Brazilian president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva [told](#) reporters at the African Union summit in Ethiopia on February 18.

"What's happening in the Gaza Strip with the Palestinian people hasn't happened at any other moment in history," he said before adding: "Actually, it has happened: when Hitler decided to kill the Jews."

Lula's comments come amid Israel's ongoing military assault that has killed close to 30,000 Palestinians since October 7 — about 1.5% of the population of the Gaza Strip.

The Brazilian president also took aim at Western countries that cut funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), after Israel accused some of its employees of involvement in Hamas' October 7 terror attack.

Noting the allegations "need to be properly investigated", Lula said this was no excuse to "paralyse" UNRWA, and called on countries to follow Brazil lead in increasing their contributions to the UN agency.

Lula also used the opportunity to reiterate his call for Palestine to be "definitively recognised as a full and sovereign state".

This is not the first time Lula has spoken out against Israel's war on Gaza. Having condemned Hamas' attacks on southern Israel as a "terrorist" act, Lula was among the first heads of state to call for a ceasefire, [saying](#) on October 14 "innocent people of Gaza must not pay the price for the insanity of those who want war".

He followed this up in November by [declaring](#) "Israel's attitude toward children, toward women, is the equivalent of terrorism", after Israel besieged Gaza's largest hospital. He also backed South Africa's genocide case against Israel in the International Court of Justice.

In response, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [described](#) Lula's comments as "disgraceful" and "crossing a red line", and defence minister Yoav Gallant [accused](#) Lula of supporting "a genocidal terrorist organisation — Hamas".

Foreign Minister Israel Katz declared Lula "*persona non grata* in Israel" and summoned the Brazilian ambassador for a dressing down on February 19. Brazil's foreign minister Mauro Vieira replied by recalling his country's ambassador from Tel Aviv.

While coming under fire from the corporate media at home, the strongest local response was reserved for forces around former far-right President Jair Bolsonaro. Pro-Bolsonaro MPs have called for Lula's impeachment over his comments and organisers of a mass protest opposing the

investigation into Bolsonaro's role in an attempted coup on January 8, 2023 invited the Israeli ambassador to attend.

In the end, the ambassador did not attend, but Bolsonaro used the opportunity to wave the Israeli flag on stage while many of his supporters raised them at the protest.

Brazil's radical left Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL) have come out strongly in defence of the president.

PSOL's Secretary of Social Movements Israel Dutra explained to *Green Left*: "Lula is right. In fact, Lula has only said what any sensible observer of Israel's current aggression against Gaza can see: there is no war, there is only slaughter.

Regarding Lula's comparison with Nazi Germany, Dutra said: "[Journalist] Breno Altman has correctly pointed out that while 'the scales and circumstances are different', the 'racist and colonial logic of the Zionist regime reeks of Hitler'.

"The reality is that Netanyahu is the spearhead of the international ultra-right, which some have rightly labelled as neo-fascist. This global ultra-right, which includes Bolsonaro, share his fundamentalist and aggressive military vision.

"That is why Gaza has become a global political and cultural battle, and the source of important clashes in every country, including Brazil.

"In this clash, we stand with the Palestinian people. We also stand with Lula and oppose the threats and reprisals against his government, as well as standing with all activists and public figures being persecuted by Zionism.

"This includes Altman, who has been targeted by the Brazilian Israelite Confederation (CONIB) and PSOL state deputy in Rio Grande do Sur, Luciana Genro, and PSOL federal deputy for São Paulo, Sâmia Bomfim, who have received several death threats against them and their families for making similar comments."

Genro, Bomfim and Dutra are all leaders of the Socialist Left Movement (MES) tendency within PSOL.

Dutra added: "While we welcome the return of Brazil's ambassador, it should be just the first step. More direct measures need to be taken such as breaking off all diplomatic and economic relations, as well as trade and military agreements, with Israel."

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