

China Urges Immediate Ceasefire in Gaza: Foreign Minister Wang Yi Stresses Humanitarian Crisis and Diplomatic Action

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Interview with Al Jazeera Media Network

by Foreign Minister Wang Yi

Q1. Foreign Minister Wang Yi, you talked about the conflict in Gaza at your recent press conference held on the margins of the annual session of the National People's Congress. What measures will China possibly take to promote an immediate ceasefire in Gaza?

Wang Yi: The protracted conflict in Gaza has become a humanitarian catastrophe that should not have happened, which has gone far beyond the bottom line of modern civilization. For nearly six months, the conflict has caused over 100,000 casualties and displaced over one million civilians.

The international community must act now.

First, what is urgent now is to realize ceasefire as early as possible, and this is the overriding priority. Even one more day of delay would mean further violation of human conscience and more erosion of the cornerstone of justice. Thanks to the concerted efforts of all parties, the United Nations Security Council not long ago adopted its first resolution demanding ceasefire since the start of the conflict. The resolution is legally binding, and should be enforced effectively to achieve an unconditional and lasting ceasefire right away.

Second, unimpeded humanitarian assistance must be ensured at all times, and this is the pressing moral obligation. China has firmly opposed forced transfer of Palestinian civilians and collective punishment against people in Gaza since the beginning of the conflict. We have vigorously supported the early establishment of a humanitarian relief mechanism, and have continuously provided humanitarian assistance to Gaza. Going forward, China will continue to work with the international community to channel all our efforts toward the ceasefire resolution enforcement, civilian protection, and rapid, safe, unhindered and sustainable delivery of humanitarian supplies to people in Gaza.

Third, further spillover of the conflict must be forestalled, and this is the practical necessity for preventing the situation from spinning out of control. The escalation of Iran-Israel hostilities is the

latest spillover of the conflict in Gaza. China calls on all related parties to stay calm and exercise restraint to avoid further escalation. With the ongoing sense of justice, China will actively promote peace and stability in the Middle East and help ease the tension.

Fourth, historical injustice to the Palestinian people must be redressed timely, and this is the right way to address the root of the conflict in Gaza. The Gaza calamity shows once again that the perpetual denial of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people is the root cause of the Palestinian question, and it is also the core issue of the Middle East question. The only way to break the vicious cycle of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, eliminate the breeding ground of extremism and hatred, and achieve enduring peace in the region is to truly restore justice to the Palestinians, effectively enforce the two-State solution, and bring about political settlement to the legitimate security concerns of all related parties.

China will continue to strengthen solidarity and cooperation with Middle East countries and the whole international community to firmly support the just cause of the Palestinian people in restoring their legitimate national rights; firmly support internal reconciliation among different factions of Palestine through dialogue; firmly support Palestine's full membership in the United Nations at an early date; and firmly support establishing the independent State of Palestine and realizing "the Palestinians governing Palestine." We call for a more broad-based, more

authoritative and more effective international peace conference to set a timetable and a roadmap for the two-State solution, to promote comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question, and to ultimately realize peaceful coexistence between Israel and Palestine as well as harmony between the Arab and Jewish peoples.

Q2. The Chinese Ministry of National Defense announced the deployment of several hundred servicemen in an escort fleet for cargo ships. In this connection, how do you see the rising tensions in the Red Sea?

Wang Yi: The Red Sea has vital international shipping lanes for goods and energy going through it. Safeguarding its peace and stability helps keep global supply chains unobstructed and ensures the international trade order. That serves the interests of the region and the wider international community. For quite some time, rising tensions in the Red Sea have affected important interests of regional countries, especially the littoral states. They have also heightened the overall security risk of the region and weighed on the global economic recovery. China is deeply concerned about this.

China's position on the Red Sea is quite clear, which can be summed up in four points:

First, attacks and harassment on civilian vessels in the Red Sea should stop. There is no excuse at all for attacks on civilians.

Second, the international community should work together in accordance with law to ensure safe passage in the Red Sea. All parties are expected to play a constructive role toward deescalation.

Third, the root cause of the rising tensions in the Red Sea is the Gaza conflict. There should be an early ceasefire in Gaza so as to stem spillovers at source.

Fourth, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Yemen and other Red Sea countries should be upheld in earnest.

Since the flare-up of the tensions, China has stayed in touch with all parties and strove vigorously for deescalation. We take seriously the legitimate concerns of countries in the region, especially the littoral states of the Red Sea. We stand ready to coordinate more closely with regional countries and work together with the international community to continue with our constructive role in restoring peace and stability in the Red Sea at an early date.

It must be noted that the ongoing escort mission by the Chinese navy is not related to the Red Sea situation. It is carried out in the Gulf of Aden and the waters off Somalia as authorized by the U.N. Security Council. Since 2008, the Chinese navy has deployed 45 task groups in that region with a

total of over 150 vessel sorties to deter pirates and conduct humanitarian operations. They have been a key part in safeguarding security in those waters. China will continue to act on the Global Security Initiative to protect the safety of international shipping lanes and to promote tirelessly a community with a shared future for mankind.

Q3. China has called for international peace conferences quite a few times to resolve the Ukraine crisis through negotiations. How will China mediate in these negotiations as the primary strategic partner of Russia? Will China pressure Russia to end the war?

Wang Yi: China's position on the Ukraine crisis is consistent, unequivocal and transparent. China is not a direct party to the conflict, and it did not start the crisis. Yet China is not an indifferent onlooker. In the two-plus years since the full escalation of the crisis, China has made tireless efforts to promote ceasefire and end the fighting. President Xi Jinping had in-depth talks with leaders of Russia, Ukraine and other countries. He stressed that peaceful negotiation is the only viable way out, and expressed China's hope for all parties to build conditions for political settlement of the crisis through dialogue. In addition, China has released a position paper particularly on the Ukraine crisis, and its Special Representative has made many visits to relevant countries to conduct good offices, pass on messages, clarify positions, and urge all sides to seek common ground, put aside differences and build consensus.

At present, the danger of further deterioration and escalation of the crisis still exists. The international community must strengthen solidarity, pool all the efforts for peace, and take real actions to lower the temperature.

It is imperative to remain committed to political settlement. Conflicts and wars do not end on the battlefield but at the table. China supports an international conference held at a proper time that is recognized by both Russia and Ukraine and that ensures equal participation of all parties as well as fair discussions of all peace plans so as to achieve early ceasefire and end the fighting.

It is imperative to uphold objectivity and impartiality. There is no panacea to defusing crises. All sides should play their due part, and build up mutual trust to create conditions for ending hostility and starting peace talks. Any attempt to exploit the chaos for selfish gains or add fuel to the flames must be firmly rejected. More important, no one should form factions or provoke bloc confrontation.

It is imperative to address both symptoms and root causes.

To uproot the crisis, we must dive deeper into the question of security. Pursuing unilateral or absolute security by willfully compressing the security space of others will inevitably tip the balance of power in the region and give rise to conflicts.

China will, together with the international community, uphold the principle of indivisible security, champion the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, accommodate legitimate security concerns of all sides, and support a balanced, effective and sustainable regional security architecture. We will work with all parties constructively to promote political settlement of the crisis, and contribute more to regional tranquility and security and enduring world peace.

Q4. On Taiwan. We have noted that eyes are on the Chinese government to see if it will take military action on China's Taiwan region. Given Taiwan's close ties with the United States and U.S. continued arms sales, how do you see the situation across the Taiwan Strait?

Wang Yi: Taiwan has been an inseparable part of China since ancient times. The Cairo Declaration jointly issued by the governments of China, the United States and the United Kingdom in 1943 clearly stated that Taiwan, which Japan had stolen from the Chinese, shall be restored to China. The Potsdam Declaration of 1945 to end World War II reiterated in Article 8 that "the terms of the Cairo Declaration shall be carried out." U.N. General Assembly Resolution 2758 was another unequivocal recognition of the one-China principle. These legally-binding international instruments are constituents of the postwar international order. They have further consolidated the historical and legal basis of Taiwan being an inalienable part of Chinese territory. Therefore,

the Taiwan question is entirely China's internal affair, and how to achieve national reunification is a matter for the Chinese people on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. We will strive for peaceful reunification with the utmost effort and greatest sincerity. In the meantime, our bottom line is also clear: we will absolutely not allow anyone to separate Taiwan from China in any way.

At present, the cross-Strait situation is stable on the whole. But it faces serious challenges as well.

The biggest challenge comes from "Taiwan independence" separatist activities and external disruptions. The "Taiwan independence" elements are the troublemakers, and do the biggest harm to cross-Strait stability. Maintaining peace across the Strait inherently means resolutely opposing "Taiwan independence." Yet some countries are giving "Taiwan independence" separatist elements more and more weapons behind the scenes, in stark contrast to their calls for peace and stability of the Strait. These moves will only increase the risk of conflict and confrontation, and seriously undermine peace and stability in the Strait and the region as a whole. China will not sit on its hands with external disruptions. No one should underestimate the firm resolve, strong will and great capability of the Chinese people to defend our sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As President Xi Jinping has stressed, complete reunification of our motherland is the shared aspiration of the people, the trend of the times and a historical inevitability, and no force can stop

it. China will ultimately achieve complete reunification, and Taiwan is bound to return to the embrace of the motherland. We also firmly believe that Middle East countries and the international community will stay committed to the one-China principle and support the Chinese people's just cause of opposing "Taiwan independence" separatist activities and striving for national reunification.

Q5. On U.S. election and China-U.S. relations. How does China see the election and the prospects of China-U.S. relations?

Wang Yi: The China-U.S. relationship bears on the well-being of the Chinese and American peoples and the future of humanity and the world. Last November, President Xi Jinping had a successful meeting with President Joe Biden in San Francisco upon invitation, and the two presidents agreed on a future-oriented San Francisco vision. China is sincere in improving its relations with the United States. A predictable, sustainable, healthy and stable China-U.S. relationship serves the interests of both the Chinese and American peoples as well as the whole world.

Meanwhile, the United States still sticks to its misperception of China, and presses ahead with its misguided policy to contain China. It has recently continued to woo its so-called allies in an attempt to provoke tensions at sea in the region and build networks to contain China at a faster

pace. It has kept ratcheting up its unilateral sanctions, and gone all out to constrain China's development of science and technology. The United States should not view the world through the lens of Cold War and zero-sum mentality, and it should not say one thing but do another. The people of the world have clear eyes, and even more so for the Middle East people that can see easily who is on the right side of history and justice. What China brings to the world is cooperation, growth, stability and win-win. China's development and rejuvenation enjoys strong internal impetus and conforms with the trend of history. It will not be stopped by any force.

The U.S. election is an internal affair of the United States. China never interferes in the internal affairs of other countries. Meddling with others is just not the Chinese way. Whoever is elected, Chinese and American peoples will still need to have exchanges and cooperation, and the two major countries must find the right way to get along with each other. The three principles—mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and win-win cooperation—put forward by President Xi Jinping are our fundamental guidance and goal when viewing and handling China-U.S. relations. During his recent phone call with President Biden, President Xi pointed out once again that two big countries like China and the United States should not cut off exchanges or turn their back on each other, still less slide into conflict or confrontation. They should instead cherish peace, value stability, and uphold credibility.

The China-U.S. relationship cannot go back to its past. But it should, and can fully, have a bright future. China is ready to work with the United States to carry out more win-win cooperation, do more that benefits the whole world, and truly fulfill their respective responsibilities to the international community.