

---

## Brazil Sends Food and Foreign Minister to Help Solve Gaza War

Contributed by Alexandre Rocha  
Monday, 12 January 2009

Ambassadors and other heads of the 15 Arab diplomatic representations based in Brasília, Brazil's capital, went to the Itamaraty, the Brazilian foreign office, on January 8, to thank the Brazilian government for the humanitarian aid offered by Brazil to the population of the Gaza Strip, in Palestine.

They also mentioned Brazil's diplomatic efforts for a ceasefire in the war being fought between Palestinian and Israeli forces. The information was given by the Palestinian ambassador to Brasília, Ibrahim Alzeben.

Friday morning, a Hercules C-130 airplane of the Brazilian Air Force (FAB) left the Rio de Janeiro Air Base for the Middle East loaded with 14 tons of medication and food donated by the Brazilian government to the population of Gaza. The airplane was supposed to arrive on Sunday in Amman, Jordan, from where the items would be transported by trucks to the conflict area.

"The plane was loaded with love and care, more than foodstuffs," said Alzeben, who was the person that called for help from the Brazilian government. The diplomat attended the departure of the airplane in Rio alongside the ambassador of the League of Arab States to Brasília, Bachar Yaghi, the representative of the Itamaraty office in Rio, Isis Martins Ribeiro de Andrade, and the representative of the Palestinian community in the city, Hassan Gamal.

The Brazilian foreign minister, Celso Amorim, arrived Sunday in Syria as the first step of a tour of the Middle East to address the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian with local authorities.

He is going to meet with the Syrian president, Bashar Al-Assad, and with the minister of Foreign Affairs in the country, Wallid Muallem; in Jerusalem, Amorim will have a meeting with the Israeli minister of Foreign Affairs, Tzip Livni; in Ramallah, the chancellor should meet with the president at the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), Mahmoud Abbas, the prime-minister, Salam Fayaad, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Riad Malki.

In the last leg of the trip, in Amman, Amorim will meet with the king of Jordan, Abdullah II, and with Foreign Minister Salah Bashir.

"This is a great initiative, because whenever we talk about Brazil, we are talking about South America. Brazil is a country of great international importance, capable of spearheading the creation of a regional bloc for peace, such as the European Union, which is part of the Quartet," said Alzeben.

The Quartet of mediators of the conflict in the Middle East is comprised of the EU, the United States, the UN and Russia.

"The Brazilian initiative is very important. There was a very clear demand by president Lula for the country to actively participate in the process and seek to promote peace by any means," he added.

At the Itamaraty, the Arab diplomats were welcomed by the secretary general of the Ministry of Foreign Relations, Samuel Pinheiro Guimarães, and the head at the Department for the Middle East and Central Asia, Sarkis Karmirian. They delivered a letter of thanks to the Brazilian government and people, signed by the Council of Arab Ambassadors to Brasília.

In the letter, the council "affirms its confidence in the Brazilian stance for the Arab causes, particularly the Palestinian one" and says that he is "eagerly awaiting for the Federal Republic of Brazil, as usual, to play an active and crucial role" for a ceasefire to take place in Gaza, allowing for immediate access of humanitarian aid, "including the granting of access by the Israeli occupation authorities."

The document also states that the ambassadors are "hopeful for an active and dynamic Brazilian participation in the resumption of negotiation in the peace process in the region," are favorable to the Israeli presence in the occupied territories and to the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

The diplomats told the secretary general at the Itamaraty that it is important for Brazil to exert pressure, along with the European Union, so as to find a solution for the conflict, given that the country is one of the main articulators of the Summit of South American and Arab Countries (Aspa), whose second meeting of heads of state and government will take place in Doha, Qatar, in April.

According to Alzeben, Guimarães ratified the Brazilian position of solidarity to the Palestinian people, calling for a fair peace in the region, and stated that the strong relations that Brazil sustains with the Arab nations lead Brazilian diplomacy to seek a strong collaborative role in the resolution of the ongoing crisis.

The Libyan ambassador, Salem Ezubedi, spoke as the dean of the council, temporarily replacing the ambassador of the United Arab Emirates, Youssuf Al-Usaimi. Ibrahim Alzeben spoke on behalf of the Palestinians.

Anba