

Mercosur Leaders Condemn Israel's Offensive on Gaza

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Presidents of the bloc urged the international community to act within international law.

The Presidents of Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Venezuela Tuesday afternoon unanimously condemned the disproportionate use of force by the Israeli troops in Gaza, which after 22 days has mostly affected civilians, women and children.

Argentina's Cristina Fernandez, Brazil's Dilma Rousseff, Uruguay's Jose Mujica, and Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro also condemned any kind of violent actions against civilian populations in Israel.

The regional heads of state are in the Venezuelan capital of Caracas for the head of states summit of the Common Southern Market bloc (Mercosur) to discuss various integration issues.

In a joint statement released this afternoon, they also expressed deep concern over the deteriorating humanitarian situation resulting from the conflict and have urged that international laws be strictly respected, including the ones concerning human rights.

The Mercosur leaders expressed support for the U.N. Human Rights Council resolution, "Ensuring Respect for international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem," approved on July 23 this year, which highlights the importance and urgency of investigating all violations of International Humanitarian Law to establish the facts and circumstances of such violations and crimes and identify those responsible.

They called for an immediate lifting of the blockade affecting Gaza's population, allowing the free movement of people, the entry of food, medicine and humanitarian aid, both by land and sea.

The presidents of Mercosur's member countries also called on the international community to exert proper pressure for an immediate lasting cease-fire and prompt restoration of dialogue as the only solution to the conflict, while reiterating its support for the solution of two states living in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

Finally, they supported the peace efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Egypt in trying to

resolve the conflict.

The death toll in Gaza is now over 1,200 after 22 days of the Israeli offensive against the besieged Gaza Strip, according to health sources on the ground.