

Herzog's Africa Visit: A Desperate Attempt to Break Israel's Diplomatic Isolation



In an unprecedented move for an Israeli president, Isaac Herzog embarked on a brief tour of Africa, visiting Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in a one-day trip. According to Israeli media, the visit focused on current issues in the international order and efforts to restore Israel's global presence.

The timing is highly sensitive for Tel Aviv, which is grappling with deepening international isolation due to its war on Gaza widely condemned as genocidal and a breach of international humanitarian law.

In recent years, African countries have increasingly taken a unified stand against Israel's human rights violations. This growing consensus is viewed by Israeli circles as a direct threat to their longstanding influence on the continent prompting urgent diplomatic maneuvers.

Israel's goal through this visit is to reestablish its foothold in Africa and halt the erosion of diplomatic ties. Amid escalating global polarization and looming UN votes on Palestine, Tel Aviv is racing to reconfigure a network of allies that could shield it from mounting isolation.

Whitewashing a Tarnished Image

The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas labeled Herzog's trip as a calculated PR stunt to rehabilitate Israel's shattered image after two years of mounting global condemnation, particularly over the Gaza offensive.

Hamas argues that Tel Aviv is using diplomatic overtures to Africa as a means of sidestepping human rights criticism and reclaiming lost international legitimacy. In a statement, the movement accused Israel of trying to erode Africa's historic support for Palestinian rights by shaping a more compliant political landscape on the continent.

The group warned that welcoming Herzog at this time amounts to complicity in the "whitewashing" of Israeli crimes in Gaza normalizing the occupation while the humanitarian fallout and ceasefire violations persist.

Hamas also urged the global community to intensify political and diplomatic boycotts of Israeli leadership. It specifically called on African nations to uphold their anti-colonial legacies, stressing that Israeli occupation remains the most extreme colonial regime in the modern era.

Israel's image crisis is deepening not only due to mounting criticism from European capitals but also from within the American political establishment. While Israeli media downplays these developments, the erosion of trust among traditional allies is forcing Tel Aviv to seek alternative diplomatic breathing space.

In this context, Africa emerges as a calculated choice not merely for expanding

relations, but as a potential base for rebuilding an international support bloc ahead of key votes and legal scrutiny at the UN and other institutions.

Tel Aviv is attempting to reengineer its foreign alliances by reclaiming African support at the UN to offset the reputational damage inflicted by the Gaza war.

Why Africa-and Why Now?

Israel is keenly aware that Africa represents a crucial voting bloc at international forums. As global power dynamics shift, African influence on international decision-making has grown, making it strategically vital for Israel not to cede this terrain to geopolitical rivals.

This urgency explains Tel Aviv's fast-tracked outreach to preserve ties with traditional partners and halt the collapse of its influence network.

The visit also had an overt economic dimension. With Israel seeking dominance in future tech and resource wars, Africa's rare earth minerals and strategic mining wealth are indispensable especially as global powers compete for control over the resources that drive advanced industries.

Israel's moves are also a response to growing rival influence. Tehran has expanded its footprint in parts of Africa, Russia has recalibrated its presence post-Wagner, and China continues to deepen its economic sway. Against this backdrop, Israel's diplomatic thrust is part of a larger battle to prevent adversaries from filling the vacuum.

The timing also coincides with key UN deliberations on Palestinian rights, the two-state solution, and legal accountability for Israeli officials. Israel's strategy seems to be a preemptive push to sway African votes ahead of these critical showdowns.

At the same time, recent coups and power shifts in Sahel countries offer Tel Aviv an opening to reposition itself in a fluid geopolitical environment and forge new alignments in one of the world's most strategically sensitive regions.

Two Years of African Solidarity with Palestine

Over the past two years, African solidarity with Gaza has evolved from symbolic gestures to multilevel action through regional institutions, judicial avenues, and grassroots movements. Since the outbreak of Israel's war on Gaza in October 2023, Africa has emerged as a frontline defender of Palestinian rights.

At the 2024 and 2025 African Union summits, the continent's leaders condemned the Israeli assault as genocide and called for urgent international sanctions against Tel Aviv.

Africa went beyond symbolic gestures. In February 2024, the AU expelled the

Israeli ambassador and barred its delegation from attending summits, escalating from merely suspending observer status.

This marked a turning point, signaling that Africa no longer treats Israeli aggression as just a political dispute but as a moral crisis demanding institutional action.

These political moves were complemented by South Africa's high-profile legal case at the International Court of Justice backed by numerous African capitals. Solidarity expanded to media, cultural, and public spheres, turning Palestine into a potent symbol of justice in African discourse.

Importantly, Africa's pro-Palestinian stance is rooted in history. Many nations draw a direct line between their anti-colonial struggles and the Palestinian cause, making the Gaza issue a matter of liberation and human dignity.

Cracks in the African Wall

Israel has steadily increased its political, economic, and security presence in select African countries, exploiting strategic interests, domestic priorities, and global shifts. This has led to a partial breach of Africa's traditionally unified support for Palestine, fragmenting what was once a near-consensus.

Tel Aviv has proven adept at exploiting political and economic vacuums to forge transactional relationships based on arms, technology, and mutual interests weakening Africa's collective position, though not dismantling it entirely.

On September 12, 2025, during the UN General Assembly vote on the "New York Declaration" supporting a two-state solution, Africa faced a revealing moment: 38 countries voted in favor, four abstained, and 12 were absent. The split wasn't accidental it reflected years of Israeli diplomatic maneuvering.

Among the abstainers were Ethiopia, Cameroon, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo each tied to Israel through complex, often opaque networks of interests.

Ethiopia's decision was shaped by concerns over its Jewish community, technical cooperation on the Nile dam, post-Tigray security arrangements, and tensions with Eritrea. Israeli support is seen as too critical to risk, especially amid internal fragility.

In Cameroon and South Sudan, Israeli influence is deeply embedded in state security. In Yaoundé, the "Israeli unit" underpins President Paul Biya's regime. In Juba, Israel's role in South Sudan's founding and ongoing arms deals has created strategic dependency.

The DRC Herzog's second stop epitomizes a fragile balance between traditional

Palestinian support and vital Israeli ties. The country, home to 70% of the world's cobalt reserves, depends on Israeli security expertise and powerful business figures like Dan Gertler. Its abstention was a calculated choice to preserve regime stability.

These abstentions reflect the success of Israel's selective penetration of strategic African states using a blend of security, arms, technology, and economic leverage. Rebuilding African unity around Palestine will require counter-efforts as sophisticated as Israel's campaigns.

Herzog's visit to Zambia and the DRC marks a calculated Israeli effort to shatter growing diplomatic isolation, restore influence in Africa, and shape voting alignments ahead of critical UN deliberations on Palestine.

Tel Aviv knows that losing Africa could mean losing one of the most crucial voting blocs at the UN. The shifts seen at AU summits and the recent "New York Declaration" vote show that Israel's isolation is deepening and that the African front is pivotal.

To blunt this momentum, Israel is adopting a piecemeal strategy targeting key states with security and economic incentives to dilute the broader pro-Palestinian consensus.

But preserving Africa as a pro-Palestinian bloc is not only a Palestinian task. It requires coordinated Arab and Muslim action politically, economically, and in the media. Palestine must be reasserted as a cause of human liberation, deeply connected to Africa's historical identity.

This is not a symbolic battle. It is a real struggle for influence, and losing it could cede vital ground in the evolving global order. The time is ripe for a proactive, sustainable strategy to ensure Africa remains morally and politically aligned with Palestine and to block Israel's diplomatic repackaging of its occupation under the guise of outreach.