

US circulates draft UN resolution calling for ‘immediate ceasefire’ in Gaza: Blinken

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Online Desk: The United States has circulated a draft UN Security Council resolution calling for an “immediate ceasefire linked to the release of hostages” in the Gaza Strip, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said.

“Well, in fact, we actually have a resolution that we put forward right now that’s before the United Nations Security Council that does call for an immediate ceasefire tied to the release of hostages, and we hope very much that countries will support that,” Blinken said.

“I think that would send a strong message, a strong signal,” he told Saudi media outlet Al Hadath on Wednesday evening during a visit to Saudi Arabia to discuss the war between Israel and Hamas.

The United States, Israel’s main backer, had previously used its UN Security Council veto to block the world body from calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Palestinian territory.

“Of course, we stand with Israel and its right to defend itself... but at the same time, it’s imperative that the civilians who are in harm’s way and who are suffering so terribly — that we focus on them, that we make them a priority, protecting the civilians, getting them humanitarian assistance,” he said.

Blinken met Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan and then held talks with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman soon after landing in the kingdom on Wednesday on the first leg of a regional tour that will include Egypt on Thursday and then Israel.

The trip is his sixth to the Middle East since the Israel-Hamas war began on October 7.

Blinken’s tour runs parallel with talks in Qatar, where mediators met for a third day on Wednesday in a renewed effort to secure a ceasefire but with little indication of an imminent agreement.

The plan being discussed in Qatar would temporarily halt the fighting as hostages are exchanged for Palestinian prisoners and the delivery of relief supplies is stepped up.

The bloodiest-ever Gaza war broke out after Hamas’s October 7 attack resulted in about 1,160 deaths in Israel, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of Israeli official figures.

Militants also seized about 250 hostages, of whom Israel believes 130 remain in Gaza, including 33 who are presumed dead.

Israel’s military has waged a retaliatory offensive against Hamas that has killed almost 32,000 people, most of them women and children, according to Gaza’s health ministry.