

Spanish FM swipes at Barcelona for cutting ties with Israel

Jose Manuel Albares calls mayor's decision to suspend twinning deal with Tel Aviv a 'unilateral move,' predicts nothing good will come of it

By [AFP](#) and [TOI STAFF](#)



Spain's Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares speaks to journalists during a NATO meeting in Bucharest, Romania, 30 November 2022 (AP Photo/Vadim Ghirda)

MADRID — The Spanish government on Friday criticized a decision by Barcelona's mayor to cut the city's ties with Israel, calling it a "unilateral move" that would not bring "anything good."

In a letter last week to Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu last week, Barcelona's leftist mayor Ada Colau said she had taken the step due to Israel's "systemic violation" of the rights of the Palestinian population.

Colau, a former anti-eviction activist, cited several Israeli policies including its construction of settlements on lands claimed by the Palestinians for a future state.

"It would be a severe mistake to apply a policy of double standards and turn a blind eye to a violation that has been, for decades, widely verified and documented by international organizations," she added.

The largely symbolic measure, which had been requested by dozens of local groups, includes the end of a twinning agreement with Tel Aviv.

Speaking at an event in Barcelona on Friday, Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares called the move a "unilateral decision, and I understand an almost personal decision, by the mayor."

"I believe that Barcelona's vocation is to be an open city, as Spain is," he added.

"I do not believe that anything good is achieved by suspending, cutting, expelling, nor is a dialogue built between Israel and Palestine," he added.



Screen capture from video of Barcelona Mayor Ada Colau, 2022. (YouTube. Used in accordance with Clause 27a of the Copyright Law)

The remarks came two days after Barcelona’s city council [symbolically rejected](#) left-wing Colau’s decision, with only her party voting in support. On Thursday, the president of FC Barcelona invited representatives from Israel’s embassy to Spain to the soccer match against England’s Manchester United, in a sign of support for the Jewish state, according to a statement from the Israeli mission.

The statement said Joan Laporta stressed during a ceremony before the game that his team — which is popular among many Israelis — has long been committed to having good ties with Israel.

“The gesture of the Barcelona soccer team joins the wave of protests in Barcelona, Catalonia and all of Spain against the mayor’s decision,” the embassy said.

After Colau announced last week she was suspending the twinning agreement, Madrid’s conservative Mayor José Luis Martínez-Almeida accused her of

antisemitism and tweeted that he has written to Tel Aviv's Mayor Ron Huldai to share "Madrid's commitment to democracy and freedom."

[Original article](#)