

Is a shift in China's rhetoric on Israel a policy change, or 'wishful thinking?'

Beijing refers to Israel's 'reasonable security concerns' for the first time in nearly a year, leading experts to debate whether China is becoming less hostile to Israel

By Lahav Harkov / October 11, 2024

A recent, slight shift in the Chinese Communist Party's rhetoric has Beijing watchers in Israel wondering if the IDF's successes in Lebanon are impacting China's policies.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning commented on the anniversary of the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks on Israel in her press conference on Tuesday, saying that "the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people need to be realized and the reasonable security concerns of Israel need to be paid attention to."

[...]

"Is Beijing finally striking a balance? Not really, but it's a welcome change," **Tuvia Gering, a fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies and the Atlantic Council**, said. "Israel is still waiting for Beijing to condemn the Oct. 7 terror attack and Hamas, yet China has been too busy hosting Hamas in its capital and acting as its mouthpiece."

"If China wants to contribute to global peace, they can stop delivering [arms] components to Russia and Iran," he added. "I care more about actions."

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Gering pointed out that rights for Palestinians were described as "legitimate," while Israel's security interests were called "reasonable." Before Oct. 7, China also referred to Israel's security interests as "legitimate," but infrequently, he said.

He also noted on the anniversary of the Oct. 7 massacre that Chinese media was full of "one-sided coverage of Palestinian suffering while erasing Israel's tragedy. It brands Israel's actions as genocidal, irrational and illegal, thereby casting the U.S. as complicit."

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