

## Thousands rally in Lebanon against Gaza offensive

Contributed by AFP  
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BEIRUT (AFP) — Thousands of people demonstrated across Lebanon on Friday denouncing Israel's offensive in Gaza, leaving coffins outside Arab embassies in the capital and slamming Arab states for failing to unite and act decisively to stop the war.

In Beirut, a convoy of dozens of vehicles drove through the city, stopping in front of the embassies of various Arab countries, including Syria, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Egypt, to place a black coffin at the entrance of each diplomatic mission.

The coffins carried an inscription that read "We are all Gaza" as well as a personalized message for each country.

"Providing assistance to the wounded won't wash away your shame," read the message addressed to Saudi Arabia, which along with the region's other political heavyweight Egypt, had rejected calls from Qatar to hold an emergency Arab League summit on Friday.

An inscription left in front of the Egyptian embassy read: "Oh Egyptians, what are you doing? (President) Hosni Mubarak is a CIA agent."

Dozens of women and children also demonstrated in front of the headquarters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Beirut waving Palestinian flags and carrying dolls wrapped in bloodied clothing to illustrate the plight of children in Gaza.

"Israel, mother of terrorism", read one placard while another showed a picture of a child and a butcher's knife carrying the inscription, "the Arab silence", on the blade.

Doctors and staff at the American University Hospital in Beirut meanwhile held a sit-in to protest the Israeli offensive that has killed more than 1,100 people in 21 days.

Thousands of Palestinians and Lebanese also demonstrated in the northern city of Tripoli and the coastal town of Sidon.

In Sidon, the protesters angrily denounced Arab states that have failed openly to back Hamas, notably US allies Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

"There is a martyr every minute and Mubarak keeps it shut," shouted the protesters, referring to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who has refused to open the Rafah border post with Gaza.

"Where is the international community and our enslaved leaders," the protesters added as they burned an American and Israeli flag.

A garbage bin plastered with a sign that read "history dustbin" was rolled onto a central square in Sidon containing effigies of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah, US President George W. Bush and Mubarak.