

A4/14 9.7.11 Terminology Leader of Turkey hints at Gaza visit

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ANKARA, Turkey – Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan escalated a dispute with Israel by suggesting he may soon visit the Gaza Strip and making his first public comments on Turkey's decision to reduce military and diplomatic ties.

"From tomorrow we will have downgraded our diplomatic ties to second-secretary level," Erdogan said Tuesday at a news conference in Ankara. "At the same time, their diplomats in Tur-

key have been downgraded and we are suspending all military ties."

Erdogan said he will decide whether to visit Gaza, the seaside Palestinian territory ruled by the Islamic Ha-

mas movement, after he arrives in Egypt next week.

Turkey suspended military relations with Israel last week and expelled Israel's ambassador over Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Ne-

tanyahu's refusal to apologize for the deaths of activists on a ship that sought to break an embargo last year and take aid supplies to the Gaza Strip.

Turkish leaders have rejected a Sept. 2 United Nations report that said the naval blockade of Gaza is legal and that Israel is entitled to enforce it.