



By: TA | AP Insight

How do the announcements regarding the recognition of Palestine affect negotiating positions?



The announcements of Western leaders on the recognition of the Palestinian state did encourage the Palestinians that they will be able to enter the peace negotiations with stronger prospects.

But, on the other side stands Israel as the unchallenged military power in the region with the strongest support ever from Washington.

Plans **announced** by France, the United Kingdom and Canada to **recognize** a Palestinian state won't bring one about anytime soon, though they could further isolate Israel and strengthen the Palestinians' negotiating position over the long term.

The problem for the Palestinians is that there may not be a long term.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu **rejects** Palestinian statehood and has vowed to maintain open-ended control over annexed east Jerusalem, the occupied West Bank and the war-ravaged Gaza Strip — territories Israel seized in the 1967 war that the Palestinians want for their state.

Israeli leaders favor the outright annexation of much of the West Bank, where Israel has already built well over 100 **settlements** housing over 500,000 Jewish settlers.

Israel's offensive in Gaza has reduced most of it to a smoldering wasteland and is pushing it toward **famine**, and Israel says it is pressing ahead with plans to relocate much of its population of some 2 million to **other** countries.

The United States, the only country with any real leverage over Israel, has **taken** its side.

Critics say these countries could do much more

Palestinians have welcomed international support for their decades-long quest for statehood but say there are more urgent measures Western countries could take if they

wanted to pressure Israel.

"It's a bit odd that the response to daily atrocities in Gaza, including what is by all accounts deliberate **starvation**, is to recognize a theoretical Palestinian state that may never actually come into being," said Khaled Elgindy, a visiting scholar at Georgetown University's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies.

There is a wide tool set at the disposal of these countries, but there is no political will to use it - Fathi Nimer

"It looks more like a way for these countries to appear to be doing something," he said.

Fathi Nimer, a policy fellow at Al-Shabaka, a Palestinian think tank, says they could have suspended trade agreements with Israel, imposed arms embargoes or other sanctions. "There is a wide tool set at the disposal of these countries, but there is no political will to use it," he said.

It's not a completely empty gesture

Most countries in the world recognized Palestinian statehood decades ago, but Britain and France would be the third and fourth permanent members of the U.N. Security Council to do so, leaving the U.S. as the only holdout.

"We're talking about major countries and major Israeli allies," said Alon Pinkas, an Israeli political analyst and former consul general in New York. "They're isolating the U.S. and they're leaving Israel dependent — not on the U.S., but on the whims and erratic behavior of one person, Trump."

Recognition could also strengthen moves to prevent annexation, said Hugh Lovatt, an expert on the conflict at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

The challenge is for those recognizing countries to match their recognition with other steps, practical steps - Hugh Lovatt

The challenge, he said, "is for those recognizing countries to match their recognition with other steps, practical steps."

It could also prove significant if Israel and the Palestinians ever resume the long-dormant peace process, which ground to a halt after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu returned to office in 2009.

"If and when some kind of negotiations do resume, probably not in the immediate future, but at some point, it puts Palestine on much more equal footing," said Julie Norman, a professor of Middle East politics at University College London.

"It has statehood as a starting point for those negotiations, rather than a certainly-not-assured endpoint."

Israel calls it a reward for violence

Israel's government and most of its political class were opposed to Palestinian statehood long before Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack triggered the war.

Netanyahu says creating a Palestinian state would reward Hamas and eventually lead to an even larger Hamas-run state on Israel's borders.

Hamas leaders have at times **suggested** they would accept a state on the 1967 borders but the group remains formally committed to Israel's destruction.



Israel says Mahmoud Abbas is not sincerely committed to peace and accuses him of tolerating incitement and militancy

Western countries envision a future Palestinian state that would be democratic but also led by political rivals of Hamas who accept Israel and help it suppress the militant group, which won parliamentary **elections** in 2006 and seized power in Gaza the following year.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, whose authority administers parts of the occupied West Bank, supports a two-state solution and cooperates with Israel on security matters.

He has made a series of **concessions** in recent months, including announcing the end to the Palestinian Authority's practice of providing stipends to the families of prisoners held by Israel and slain militants.

Such measures, along with the security coordination, have made it deeply unpopular with Palestinians, and have yet to earn it any favors from Israel or the Trump administration. Israel says Abbas is not sincerely committed to peace and accuses him of tolerating incitement and militancy.

Lovatt says there is much to criticize about the PA, but that "often the failings of the Palestinian leadership are exaggerated in a way to relieve Israel of its own obligations."

The tide may be turning, but not fast enough

If you had told Palestinians in September 2023

that major countries were on the verge of recognizing a state, that the U.N.'s highest court had **ordered** Israel to end the occupation, that the International Criminal Court had ordered Netanyahu's arrest, and that prominent voices from across the U.S. political spectrum were furious with Israel, they might have thought their dream of statehood was at hand.

But those developments pale in comparison to the ongoing war in Gaza and smaller but similarly destructive military offensives in the West Bank.

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Israel's military victories over Iran and its allies have left it the dominant and nearly unchallenged military power in the region, and Trump is the strongest supporter it has ever had in the White House.

"This (Israeli) government is not going to change policy," Pinkas said. "The recognition issue, the ending of the war, humanitarian aid — that's all going to have to wait for another government."