



By: TA | AP Insight

Are the Europeans really to blame for the collapse of the Gaza ceasefire talks?



Washington confirms that there is a deep division among Western allies over the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

U.S. Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee sought Wednesday to blame a recent breakdown in Gaza ceasefire talks on the decision by some European leaders to recognize Palestinian statehood.

Talks over a lasting ceasefire have repeatedly stalled since the early months of the war sparked by Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack — and long before there was any talk of major European states **recognizing** Palestinian statehood.

The decisions were announced by France, Britain and other countries after the Trump administration's Mideast envoy had already walked away in **frustration** from the negotiations, which happened behind closed doors.

It's unclear how and when they began to break down.

But Huckabee's remarks in an interview with The Associated Press point to a sharp divide among Western nations about how to approach the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the rift has only deepened since President Donald Trump took office.

Many European countries have sought to pressure Israel — the stronger party — and frame the pursuit of a two-state **solution** as a way to address the root causes of a conflict that long predates the war in Gaza.

But the Trump administration has given Israel wide latitude to end the war on its terms.

A dispute over which side should be pressured

The White House fully supported Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's **decision** to end an earlier ceasefire that Trump had helped broker and resume wide-ranging military

operations, during which Israel prevented food, medicine and other goods from entering Gaza for more than two months.

Trump appears to have adopted Israel's position that further military pressure — including a planned **offensive** into some of the most densely populated areas of Gaza — will force Hamas to surrender.

“We will only see the return of the remaining hostages when Hamas is confronted and destroyed!!!” Trump posted this week on his Truth Social site.

Meanwhile, France, Britain and more than two dozen other Western-aligned nations have expressed mounting outrage at Israel's actions, demanding that it halt the fighting and do more to facilitate humanitarian aid.

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Britain explicitly linked the two, **saying** it would hold off on recognizing a Palestinian state if Israel agreed to a ceasefire in Gaza, stopped building settlements in the West Bank and committed to a two-state solution.

Israel's current government and most of its political class were opposed to Palestinian statehood even before the war, and they now say it would reward Hamas and allow the militants to eventually carry out more Oct. 7-style attacks.

‘A counterproductive effect’

Huckabee, who is himself a longtime **opponent** of Palestinian statehood, said the “noise that has been made by European leaders recently ...

is having the counterproductive effect that they probably think that they want."

"If they believe that unilaterally calling for a two-state, a Palestinian state recognition, immediately brings them closer, the sad truth is it's taking them further away," he said.

The AP sought comment from the foreign ministries of France and Britain, which did not immediately respond.

Most Palestinians believe the decades-old conflict is rooted in Israel's military occupation of lands they want for an independent state and its continuous expansion of Jewish settlements.

No serious or substantive talks have been held since Netanyahu returned to office in 2009

Attempts to negotiate a two-state solution going back to the early 1990s repeatedly broke down as violence flared, and no serious or substantive talks have been held since Netanyahu returned to office in 2009.

On Wednesday, Israel approved plans for settlements in an area known as E1 outside Jerusalem, which the Palestinians and others say will cut the West Bank in half and make the establishment of a viable and contiguous state virtually impossible.

Past U.S. administrations joined their Western allies in vehemently opposing such plans. Trump and Huckabee — a strong supporter of Israeli settlements — did not.

Ceasefire talks have shown signs of progress

The ceasefire talks have continued, with Hamas saying this week that it accepted a proposal from Arab mediators that is similar to an earlier one advanced by the U.S. and accepted by Israel. Israel and the U.S. have not yet responded to the offer.



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Huckabee said he could not elaborate on the talks beyond saying he would not trust that Hamas is serious until they "put their signatures on it" and that the group could be "stringing this along," as the U.S. and Israel have alleged in the past.

The main disagreement has been over the conditions in which the war would end.

Hamas has said it will only release the remaining hostages in exchange for a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, while Israel says it is committed to returning all the hostages, defeating and disarming Hamas, and maintaining lasting security control over the territory.

In Israel, many blame Netanyahu for the failure of the talks, accusing him of seeking to prolong the war in order to keep his far-right governing coalition intact. Hundreds of thousands took to the streets over the weekend to protest his planned offensive and call for a deal to return the captives.