



The International Push to Recognize Palestinian Statehood

Implications for Israel, the Palestinians, and the International Arena

Over the past two years, international opposition to the war in Gaza has prompted a slew of countries to recognize a Palestinian state—with an uptick in recent months among several prominent U.S. allies and Israeli trading partners.

Background: The Status of Palestinian Statehood Pre-October 7

The Palestinian people have never had a state, yet the scope of international recognition of Palestinian statehood has [expanded considerably](#) in recent decades. The United Nations' recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in 1974 and Yasser Arafat's declaration of a Palestinian state in 1988 laid the groundwork for dozens of countries to confer statehood recognition onto the Palestinians.

However, international diplomatic recognition of Palestinian statehood has not been tied to tangible advancements in Palestinian sovereignty on the ground. In the 1990s, the Oslo Accords negotiated between Israel and the PLO drove the creation of Palestinian governing institutions and a semi-autonomous Palestinian entity: the Palestinian Authority (PA), envisioned by many as the vehicle for future Palestinian statehood in most of the West Bank and Gaza. Countries that recognize Palestinian statehood rhetorically treat the PA (on the ground) and the PLO (on the international stage) as equivalent to a full state, reflected in official communications that reference a State of Palestine and the exchange of diplomatic missions at the ambassadorial level.

As the peace process largely stagnated in the 2010s, Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas (who simultaneously chairs the PLO and serves as president of the PA) shifted to a strategy of “internationalizing” the conflict—leveraging international institutions to bolster worldwide support for the Palestinians, pressure Israel diplomatically, and advance the goal of Palestinian statehood from the outside in. A component of this strategy included pushing for greater statehood recognition, both on the part of individual countries and at the U.N. level. After Abbas' bid to achieve full member status at the U.N. failed as a result of a U.S. veto at the Security Council, in 2012, the U.N. General Assembly voted to elevate the PLO's status from observer entity to [non-member observer state](#). This decision granted the PLO recognition under the moniker “the State of Palestine” across all U.N. systems and allowed the Palestinian mission to sign onto international treaties and join additional U.N.-affiliated organizations. These newfound privileges allowed the Palestinians to join the International Criminal Court, for instance, from which they were able to file war crimes charges against Israeli actions in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem.

At the start of 2023, 138 of the U.N.'s 193 member states recognized Palestine. Yet even prior to October 7, the extent of recognition stood in stark contrast to the situation on the ground, where

Israeli and Palestinian rhetoric and policy continued to undermine the goal of separating into two states.

Palestinian Statehood Recognition Since October 7

Nearly two years of war in Gaza has brought Israel's international standing to the lowest point in recent history. Outrage over the humanitarian crisis, the extent of the casualties and destruction in Gaza, and the Israeli government's rhetoric have amplified the voices of Israel's preexisting antagonists and alarmed longstanding partners. Both groups have turned to unilateral recognition of Palestine as a diplomatic tool to ramp up pressure on Israel or lay the diplomatic groundwork for a two-state outcome.

A key turning point in international perception of Israel's conduct of the war was the invasion of Rafah in the spring of 2024, which until that point had been the last major city in Gaza left untouched by the ground operation. The prospect of displacing over one million Palestinians sheltering in the city without a suitable humanitarian zone to evacuate them elevated criticism of the war to unforeseen heights, including from the [Biden administration](#). Amid this escalating outrage began the first wave of countries recognizing a Palestinian state since October 7: the [Caribbean nations](#) of Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Bahamas, all four of which framed the step as a reflection of their commitment to a two-state outcome.

More notable, however, was the wave that followed soon after; Spain, Ireland, and Norway [jointly proclaimed](#) their recognition of Palestine on May 28, 2024, with [Slovenia](#) and [Armenia](#) following suit the following month. While all of these governments wrapped the recognition announcements in aspirational language about just resolutions and universal human rights commitments, the timing was dictated by Israeli action they opposed—implying a desire to penalize Israel by imposing a solution that registers to most Israelis as fantastical and unrealistic in a post-October 7 environment.

The expansion of Palestine recognition across Europe reflected a shift in the conflict's perception across a prominent segment of the Western world. But none of these countries are considered close Israeli partners and have governments that are often harshly critical of Israel. Public sympathy for the Palestinian cause has long run high in [Spain](#), [Ireland](#), and [Norway](#) in particular. For this reason, the spring 2024 wave of Palestine recognition did not meaningfully transform Israel's strategic outlook or spark a broader discussion about the country's international standing among Israelis.

In the spring of 2025, Mexico [joined](#) the vast majority of Latin American nations in explicitly recognizing Palestinian statehood, a process that had begun with the upgrading of the Palestinians' delegation to Mexico to embassy status in 2023.

The most meaningful boost in the campaign for Palestinian statehood recognition, however, came in June 2025 when President Emmanuel Macron [announced](#) that France would become the first G7 nation to recognize Palestine at the U.N. General Assembly on September 22. This announcement marked a major diplomatic shift given France's diplomatic clout, leading position within the EU, and longstanding alliance with Israel—along with Macron's staunch support for Israel's right to self-defense, including in the wake of October 7. Macron's decision was, to a large extent, [motivated](#) by domestic outrage in France over the war in Gaza and mounting political pressure to take a stand. But it also happened to coincide with a joint [French-Saudi conference](#) to promote an end to the war in Gaza, a two-state outcome that

sidelines Hamas, and reforming the PA. Rather than a vague expression of solidarity with the Palestinians, support for two states, or opposition to Israel, this suggests substantive frustration with the actions of a close partner and a desire to tangibly advance a productive diplomatic solution. The French-Saudi initiative culminated in the [New York Declaration](#), which called for “irreversible steps” toward two states, and was subsequently [adopted by the UNGA](#) in September with 142 countries voting in favor.

In the wake of France’s recognition announcement, two additional G7 countries followed suit: the [United Kingdom](#) and [Canada](#). Over the past few months, [Malta](#), [Australia](#), [Belgium](#), and [Luxembourg](#) have also proclaimed their intention to recognize Palestine at the UNGA, with Portugal “[considering](#)” the move. Notably, the UK and Canada’s announcements were conditional: for the UK, tied to the continued absence of a ceasefire in Gaza, and for Canada, predicated on the PA undergoing reform (although Prime Minister Carney’s statement was ambiguous as to whether his government viewed Abbas’ rhetorical commitments as satisfactory).

As of mid-September 2025, 153 U.N. member states are expected to recognize Palestine upon the conclusion of the UNGA on September 22, 2025.

Assessing the Recognition Trend

The Israeli government strongly [opposes](#) unilateral recognition of Palestinian statehood and considers these countries’ decisions as acts of hostility that strengthen Hamas and constitute a reward for terrorism—a sentiment [echoed](#) by the Trump administration. This view is an extension of the current government’s vehement [opposition](#) to a Palestinian state under any conditions, its view that the Jewish people possess an “[exclusive and inalienable right](#)” to the entire Land of Israel, and its policies on the ground that aim to [thwart prospects](#) for a two-state outcome. Indeed, Israel’s leadership has used the push to impose a Palestinian state as a [pretext](#) for taking unprecedented steps such as advancing [construction in E1](#) and potentially even declaring sovereignty over parts of the West Bank. According to the zero-sum outlook that currently informs Israeli decision-making, any decision made on behalf of the Palestinians is inherently hostile to Israel or even [rooted in antisemitism](#).

In reality, there are layered rationales motivating the Palestine recognition push, and the precise impact of each layer varies depending on the country and who is in charge. These include fundamental opposition to Israel rooted in a wholesale embrace of the Palestinian narrative; humanitarian sympathy for Palestinians’ current plight; frustration with Israeli behavior that has developed over the past two years; domestic political concerns amid public pressure to help the Palestinians; a desire to create momentum toward a just resolution for both peoples; and, to an extent, antisemitism that holds Israel to a genuinely unfair standard or obscures Israeli victimhood in any context. Unilaterally recognizing a Palestinian state is simultaneously leveraged as a punishment to pressure Israel—validating the Israeli government’s zero-sum view—and held up as a means of advancing an outcome to the conflict that is in the interest of both peoples.

Intentions aside, foreign governments or international bodies declaring recognition of Palestinian statehood do not tangibly advance Palestinian sovereignty on the ground. In fact, statehood recognition intended to pressure the Israeli government to end the war in Gaza or change course on the Palestinian issue more broadly may have the opposite effect of driving Israel’s far-right government toward steps like West Bank annexation, which poses an acute threat to prospects for Palestinian statehood. Meanwhile, the demand to recognize Palestine

post-October 7 reads as detached from reality to the majority of Israelis—even those who aren't right wing and may be open to two states under the right conditions—who see no real constituency in Palestinian society that unequivocally rejects extremism and recognizes Israel's legitimacy. While statehood recognition may boost the profile of the Palestinian leadership on the international stage, the goal of two states would be better served by working with the PA to [prepare it for statehood](#). True progress requires Israeli and Palestinian leadership committed to compromise and sufficient trust between the Israeli and Palestinian publics.