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Palestine

# The Mirage of a Palestinian State

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**More countries recognizing a hypothetical entity called “State of Palestine” is positive in terms of its symbolic impact in recognizing the Palestinian people’s right to a state, a right denied by most components of the Zionist establishment, especially the far-right Zionist spectrum that currently governs Israel. However, the meanings and implications of this recognition greatly vary with time.**

The countries that recognized the State of Palestine following its declaration by the Palestinian National Council, held in Algiers in 1988, against the backdrop of the great popular Intifada in the 1967-occupied territories, supported what was seen at the time as a major episode in the history of Palestinian struggle. This was how it appeared indeed, even though the declaration was, in fact, a diversion of the Intifada from its original course. Yasser Arafat and his aides in the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) sought to pursue the illusion of an “independent Palestinian state” by harnessing popular energy for a diplomatic negotiation process sponsored by the United States. Thus, the 1988 declaration was immediately followed by Arafat’s shameful acquiescence to the condition Washington had imposed on him for negotiations: his resounding public statement that “We totally and absolutely renounce all forms of terrorism” (reiterated at a press conference in Geneva on 14 December 1988).

The declaration of statehood at the time had nevertheless the character of a defiant gesture and was backed by the countries that effectively supported the right of the Palestinian people in the 1967 territories to free themselves from Zionist occupation. A total of 88 countries recognized the newly proclaimed State of Palestine, including almost all Arab countries (with the exception of the Syrian Assad regime, which was a bitter opponent of the Palestinian leadership), most countries in Africa and Asia (with some natural exceptions, such as the apartheid regime in South Africa, a long-standing ally of the Zionist state), and the countries of the Eastern bloc dominated by the Soviet Union. In a notable global split, no country of the Western bloc, led by the United States, did recognize the State of Palestine at the time, except for Turkey, nor did any Latin American country, except for Cuba and Nicaragua, the two rebels against Washington’s hegemony.

Recognitions continued after 1988, gradually encompassing the remaining countries in Asia, Africa – with a few exceptions (Cameroon and Eritrea, for opposite reasons) – and Latin America. The first NATO member states to recognize the State of Palestine – in addition to Turkey and the Eastern European countries formerly within the Soviet Union’s orbit, which had therefore recognized it before joining the alliance – were Iceland in 2011 and Sweden in 2014. Other NATO member states did not follow suit until the full scope of Israel’s genocidal war in the Gaza Strip became obvious. Norway, Spain, and Slovenia recognized the State of Palestine in 2024, followed by the remaining Latin American countries (the most recent being Mexico this year).

Until the French president announced his intention to formally recognize the State of Palestine next September, when the UN General Assembly convenes, all the powers of the geopolitical West – particularly the United States, Germany, Britain, Italy, Japan, and Australia – had refused to do so and still refuse to this day, citing various pretexts, particularly the highly hypocritical argument that recognition could hinder peace efforts. [This article was written before Keir Starmer’s conditional announcement that the UK too would recognize the State of Palestine in September unless Israel agrees to a ceasefire and an improvement of the situation in Gaza.] Public pressure is mounting in these same countries over the ongoing genocide in Gaza, at a time when the deliberate nature of the crime has reached its peak with the current organized starvation of the people of Gaza. This could lead to new recognitions and has already led to increased pressure on Israel to allow food aid into the Strip.

The truth is that those who waited for Israel to commit the ongoing atrocities in plain sight of the entire world before recognizing the State of Palestine are primarily trying to cover up their tacit complicity in the Zionist occupation of the

West Bank and Gaza Strip for nearly sixty years. The last-minute awakening of the British Prime Minister and the German Chancellor, and their decision to participate in Jordan's and the United Arab Emirates' airdrop of aid to the Gaza Strip – a move condemned by humanitarian relief organizations as a useless symbolic act – deserve nothing but contempt, especially since the two mentioned NATO countries are among the most important military collaborators of the Zionist state after the United States.

What should be obvious is that current efforts to establish a Palestinian state, such as the conference held in New York under French and Saudi sponsorship, bear now a very different meaning than recognition in 1988. That year witnessed the best political conditions the Palestinian people have ever known since the 1948 Nakba. The Intifada garnered international popular sympathy and caused a severe morale crisis within Israel's society and military. It created the conditions for the Zionist Labour Party's return to power and its conclusion of the Oslo Accords with the Arafat leadership, something unimaginable before that time, although the agreement included deeply unfair conditions that Yasser Arafat accepted out of sheer delusion.

However, what seemed like a hypothetical but achievable State in 1988, and even in 1993 (despite the Oslo process being doomed to failure), is now less realistic than a mirage in the desert. Perhaps a tenth or more of the Gaza Strip's population have been slain, and at least 70 percent of the Strip's buildings have been destroyed, including 84 percent of buildings in the northern part and 89 percent of the buildings in Rafah (according to a recent geographic survey conducted by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem). So, what kind of Palestinian state are they talking about? The most generous of them see it as governed by the Oslo framework, which resulted in a Palestinian Authority under Israeli tutelage, whose nominal "sovereignty" is limited to less than a fifth of the West Bank, in addition to Gaza. Others envision an even more limited entity, following Israel's reconquest of most of the Gaza Strip and the expansion of Zionist settlements in the West Bank.

The conditions set by the Palestinian National Consensus in 2006 (the Prisoners' Document) as minimum requirements for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state – namely, the withdrawal of the Israeli army and settlers from all Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem; the release of all Palestinian prisoners held by Israel; and recognition of the right of Palestinian refugees to return and reparations – have been consigned to oblivion as "extremist" demands, whereas they were originally conceived as minimum conditions, expressing a willingness to compromise. The truth is that any Palestinian entity that ignores these basic conditions will be nothing more than a renewed version of the vast open-air prison in which the Zionist state confines the Palestinian people within the 1967 territories, with an ever-shrinking geographic area and a population that continues to dwindle as a result of genocide and ethnic cleansing.

29 July 2025

*Source: Translated from the Arabic original published in [Al-Quds al-Arabi](#) for the [author's blog](#).*

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