# Advancing Israeli sovereignty in response to recognition of a Palestinian state

written by Dr. Raphael BenLevi | 06.08.2025

The intention of key Western states – including France, the UK, and Canada – to recognize a Palestinian state at the upcoming UN General Assembly presents not only a diplomatic challenge for Israel, but also a strategic opportunity. Instead of merely issuing condemnations, Israel should seize the moment by promoting an alternative policy: ending the prospect of a Palestinian state and advancing full Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank, alongside offering a framework of self-governance for the local Arab population.

The European-led initiative should not be taken lightly – even if it does not immediately alter the facts on the ground. The Palestinian Authority clearly lacks the minimal conditions required for statehood: it has no defined borders, no security control over its purported territory, and no capacity to enter into and uphold international agreements. However, recognition still carries long-term psychological and political significance. From Israel's perspective, this move is a hostile act that could damage its international and regional standing and lead to security threats.

**Israeli responses**

Therefore, Israel must respond with concrete actions rather than just statements. Declaring its intention to apply sovereignty over the entire area of Judea and Samaria – and doing so immediately in key strategic areas such as the Jordan Valley, the E1 area, and the major settlement blocs – would make it unequivocally clear that the idea of a Palestinian state is no longer on the table.

This is not only a necessary response to the current diplomatic wave, but also an essential step in the wake of the October 7 attack. Just as steps to promote a Palestinian state would constitute a strategic victory for Hamas, steps that eliminate any possibility of Palestinian statehood would constitute a strategic defeat for Hamas.

Moreover, since the attack, Israeli public opinion has shifted, and today only a minority still supports the idea of a Palestinian state in the West Bank. It is now widely understood that such a state would pose a far greater security threat than Gaza did before the war.

But equal in importance to rejecting Palestinian statehood is the positive alternative: Israel has no interest in directly managing the daily lives of the Arabs in the West Bank. Therefore, it is appropriate to promote a structure of decentralized self-governance based on municipal and regional divisions – in contrast to the current centralized and corrupt rule of the PA. In this model, Palestinians would be granted a significant degree of self-determination, but without the establishment of an independent state.

**What would the consequences be?**

Would such a move undermine the prospects of normalization with Saudi Arabia? It is important to understand that Saudi Arabia has already hardened its conditions for normalization, demanding a firm commitment to a process leading to Palestinian statehood. This means that as things stand, the Saudis are currently insisting on something that Israel simply cannot offer, and this is unlikely to change even after the fighting in Gaza ends.

Paradoxically, a unilateral Israeli move to eliminate the possibility of a sovereign Palestinian state – combined with the advancement of a Palestinian self-governance plan – might eventually allow the Saudis to walk back their demands. In the short term, it may provoke significant criticism, but, over time, it could provide Riyadh with an off-ramp and allow normalization to move forward nonetheless.

It must be recalled that after the achievements in Lebanon, Syria, and Iran – and once Israel secures victory in Gaza – a major war front remains in the West Bank. The current situation is unstable: the PA may collapse, terrorism is a daily threat, and there is widespread illegal Arab encroachment on territory.

The war, which to a large extent began as a result of the Oslo Accords and the Gaza withdrawal, should conclude with a historic shift away from the Oslo trajectory – driving the final nail into the coffin of the idea of a Palestinian state.

Only if this is clear to Israel itself, might it become clear to the French, British,

and Canadians.

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