

# Joint Recognition of the Palestinian State by Norway, Ireland, and Spain: How viable is the two-state solution without talks?

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Three European countries have announced their recognition of the State of Palestine. Does it bring a two-state solution closer?



Credit: Sky News

## Introduction

Three European states have announced that they will all recognise the state of Palestine jointly on May 28. Slovenia and Malta proclaimed that they would follow suit quickly. It was the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) that, within the pre-1967 borders, unilaterally declared the establishment of the Palestinian State in 1988, asserting its sovereignty over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. On the verge of the breakdown of the bipolar world

order, the Palestinian umbrella group made the political decision to end its international isolation.

As of today, around two-thirds of the members of the United Nations (143 out of 193 states) accepted that declaration, mainly countries representing the Global South. Few states in the Global North endorse this proclamation because they primarily think that direct bi- or multilateral negotiations rather than a unilateral decision will open the door for the two-state solution. Among the EU members, it is mainly the countries from Central Eastern Europe due to their socialist past, which acknowledged the declaration made by the PLO in 1988 (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania). The last two in this row from the West were Iceland (as an EFTA state) in 2011 and Sweden (an EU member state) in 2014.

**What does the recognition mean and what does not?**

The recognition of the Palestinian State by individual states could largely be interpreted as a symbolic political gesture aimed at keeping the two-state solution alive amidst the violent conflict and in the absence of political plans. 'In the midst of a war, with tens of thousands killed and injured, we must keep alive the only alternative that offers a political solution for Israelis and Palestinians alike: two states, living side by side, in peace and security', states [Norway's prime minister](#). Norway hosted the secret talks at the FAFO Institute between the PLO and Israel in 1993, which resulted in the Declaration of Principles, or the Oslo Accords. The [PM of Ireland](#) argued that 'Recognizing the state of Palestine sends a message that there's a viable alternative to the nihilism of Hamas. Hamas has nothing to offer but pain and suffering to Israelis and Palestinians alike'.

The three states would elevate their representation in Ramallah from a representative office to an Embassy after the announcement. Israel responded by recalling its ambassador for consultation from each country. The three states try to convince the Brussels bureaucrats of the European Union (Norway is not a member of the EU) to move forward with their support of the two-state solution. However, with a deeply divided EU, a dismissive US, and the enraged Israeli political class, of whom Netanyahu represents the dovish

fraction, it would be extremely difficult to advance the implementation of the two-state solution.

The astronomically high number of Palestinian civilians killed by Israeli offensives has led to a discernible convergence among EU member states. Along with the US, all EU nations sanctioned two violent settler groups operating in the West Bank. [A joint proclamation](#) from 26 countries—Hungary not included—warns Israel that a long-term truce is necessary instead of Rafah's planned ground offensive.

After October 7, Spain imposed a total arms embargo against Israel. However, Spanish media outlets claim that [Madrid sent weaponry to Israel](#) worth 1 million euros in November 2023. Spanish officials attributed the shipment to licenses granted prior to the conflict between Israel and Hamas on October 7. Ireland and an Israeli armaments firm have [an active agreement worth 295,000 euros](#) a year for the upkeep of UAVs that Ireland originally bought from Israel. [Leftist organisations](#) in Norway brought up the fact that some firearms enter Israel through third nations, such as the United States, even though Norway is prohibited from sending arms to Israel.

This political gesture of recognition of Palestine comes a few days after a [UN General Assembly vote](#) initiated by the United Arab Emirates called for the reconsideration of the full membership of Palestine in the United Nations. The United States once again blocked a Security Council resolution that would have accepted Palestine's full membership earlier in April. Furthermore, in accordance with the [Montevideo Convention](#), nations are required to meet the minimum requirements of 1. possessing a territory; 2. having a populace; 3. establishing a government; and 4. being able to collaborate with other states.

## Conclusion

Currently, theoretically, Palestine satisfies all the prerequisites: it encompasses the West Bank and Gaza Strip with their respective populations, is governed by the Palestinian Authority based in Ramallah, and hosts numerous representative offices or embassies of foreign states. As of today, the Palestinian Authority controls only less than 40% of the West Bank; 60% remains under Israeli occupation. Politically, the territories of the Palestinian

state have been divided between Fatah and Hamas since 2007. Direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority were halted in 2014.

Thus, the three states' gesture of recognition at the minimum demands a return to the negotiating table, a cornerstone of any rule-based international order, without immediately resolving the Palestinian issue. The EU's [Josep Borrell](#), after the ruling of the International Criminal Court, cautiously underlined the dilemma Brussels faces: "We will have to choose between our support to the international institutions and the rule of law, or our support to Israel, and both things is (sic) going to be quite difficult to make compatible".

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