



FAQs:

Recognition of the State of Palestine

Why should Ireland recognise the State of Palestine?

Israel's relentless settlement expansion in the West Bank including East Jerusalem is killing off the possibility of a Palestinian state being created in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967. For Ireland to recognise the State of Palestine now would be a powerful reaffirmation of its commitment to the creation of a Palestinian state and to a two-state solution in Israel/Palestine.

Isn't recognition premature given that Palestine hasn't got control over its own territory?

It is true that Palestine hasn't got control over its own territory but that is a consequence of Israeli military occupation of that territory. The Israeli occupier should not be accorded a veto on Ireland's recognition of the State of Palestine.

But recognition won't change the situation on the ground in Israel/Palestine, will it?

True, recognition by Ireland will not of itself change the situation on the ground in Israel/Palestine. Even recognition by every other state in the world would be very unlikely to persuade Israel to end its occupation so that a Palestinian state can be established. But it would constitute a firm statement of support for that objective by the international community. As such, it would put pressure on Israel to make constructive proposals for the establishment of a viable Palestinian state, which it failed to do during the recent Kerry negotiations.

What will it take to make Israel withdraw from the occupied territories?

It is certain that without pressure from the outside world, Israel will never withdraw from the occupied territories to allow a Palestinian state to be established. Would worldwide recognition of the State of Palestine be sufficient to make Israel withdraw? Very unlikely. Most likely, it will take serious and sustained economic sanctions.

Remember, the Likud Party Charter states [\[1\]](#):

- a. "The Government of Israel flatly rejects the establishment of a Palestinian Arab state west of the Jordan river."
- b. "The Jordan river will be the permanent eastern border of the State of Israel."
- c. "Jerusalem is the eternal, united capital of the State of Israel and only of Israel. The government will flatly reject Palestinian proposals to divide Jerusalem"
- d. "The Jewish communities in Judea, Samaria and Gaza are the realization of Zionist values. Settlement of the land is a clear expression of the unassailable right of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel and constitutes an important asset in the defense of the vital interests of the State of Israel. The Likud will continue to strengthen and develop these communities and will prevent their uprooting."

This document from 1999 has never been disowned by the Likud party – and its leader, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, has unashamedly governed in accordance with it since he was elected in 2009.

Why should Ireland take this step when most EU states have not?

Historically, Ireland has taken a lead in Europe in supporting the Palestinian people. In the Bahrain Declaration of February 1980, Ireland was the first European state to declare explicitly that the Palestinian people “had a right to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent State in Palestine” (see Sadaka Briefing *Palestine in Irish Politics* [2]). Ireland should continue in that tradition today and formally recognise the State of Palestine as soon as possible.

When did the PLO declare the existence of a Palestinian state?

In November 1988, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) declared the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza, territory which has been under Israeli military occupation since 1967 [3]. With this declaration, the Palestinian leadership accepted the objective of a state on just 22% of their historic homeland, with Israel continuing to exist in the other 78%.

Which states have already recognised the State of Palestine?

In response to the PLO declaration of November 1988, about 90 states in the world recognised the State of Palestine almost immediately and granted the PLO full diplomatic relations. Today, 135 states do so, the latest being Sweden – on 30 October 2014.

You can find a list of states that have recognised Palestine, and when they did so, at [4]. And the map at [5] shows those which have and those which haven't. The latter include most states in Western Europe, the US, Canada and Australia – and Israel.

Sweden was the first state to recognise Palestine while a member of the EU. Eight other EU states (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) had already done so prior to joining the EU.

Many states, including Ireland, which have not gone as far as full recognition, have established some form of diplomatic relations with Palestine. In January 2011, Ireland upgraded Palestinian representation in Dublin to a Mission [6]: this would be upgraded to an Embassy if full recognition were accorded.

Why is this being discussed now?

Both Houses of the Oireachtas have called on the Irish Government to recognise the State of Palestine.

On 22 October 2014, there was all-party support for a motion in the Seanad proposed by Averil Power of Fianna Fail, which called on the Irish Government to “formally recognise the State of Palestine and do everything it can at an international level to help secure a viable two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict” [7].

And on 10 December 2014, Sinn Fein proposed a motion in the Dáil, which called on the Irish Government to “officially recognise the State of Palestine, on the basis of the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as the capital, as established in UN resolutions, as a further positive contribution to securing a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict” [8]. This motion was passed unanimously.

Recognition of the State of Palestine is also a live issue in other European states.

On 13 October 2014, the House of Commons voted overwhelmingly (274 to 12) for a motion calling on the UK government to “recognise the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel, as a contribution to securing a negotiated two state solution” [9].

On 18 November 2014, the lower house of the Spanish Parliament voted overwhelmingly (319 to 2) for recognition, albeit with the stipulation that it “should be the consequence of a process negotiated between the parties that guarantees peace and security for both”, which appears to accord Israel a veto on recognition [10].

On 2 December 2014, the lower house of the French Parliament passed a motion by 330 votes to 151 asking the French Government to “use the recognition of a Palestinian state with the aim of resolving the conflict definitively” [11].

On 17 December 2014, the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly (498 to 88) for a motion which supported “in principle the recognition of Palestinian statehood” [\[12\]](#).

Parliaments in other Western European states are expected to pass similar motions in the near future.

None of these votes are binding on government but they indicate the frustration felt in Western Europe about Israel’s failure to end its military occupation so that a Palestinian state can be established.

But hasn’t the State of Palestine been recognised by the UN?

In the above, we are talking about the formal recognition of the State of Palestine by individual states. In November 2012, Palestine won an historic victory at the UN when it was recognised and granted observer rights as a “non-member state” with the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza as its territory (see Sadaka Briefing: *Palestinian state recognised by UN* [\[13\]](#)). The UN General Assembly approved this by an overwhelming (138 to 9) majority. By and large, the states that voted in favour had already recognised Palestine bilaterally.

A year earlier, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas had made a formal application for full UN membership, which requires a positive recommendation by the Security Council to the General Assembly, followed by a two-thirds majority in the General Assembly. This application was bound to fail because the US announced long in advance that it would veto a positive recommendation by the Security Council. In the event, no vote was taken in the Security Council and the US didn’t have to cast its veto. However, it is almost certain that, had there been a positive recommendation from the Security Council, the General Assembly would have endorsed it and voted for full UN membership for Palestine.

David Morrison
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References:

- [\[1\]](#) mondoweiss.net/2011/11/netanyahu%E2%80%99s-party-platform-flatly-rejects-establishment-of-palestinian-state
- [\[2\]](#) www.sadaka.ie/Files/Palestine_in_Irish_Politics.pdf
- [\[3\]](#) unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/6EB54A389E2DA6C6852560DE0070E392
- [\[4\]](#) en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_recognition_of_the_State_of_Palestine
- [\[5\]](#) upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/08/Palestine_recognition_only.svg
- [\[6\]](#) www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/ireland-upgrades-status-of-palestinian-mission-to-embassy-1.339170
- [\[7\]](#) oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/seanad2014102200011
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- [\[9\]](#) www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/backbench-business-committee/news/mps-debate-palestine-and-israel/
- [\[10\]](#) uk.reuters.com/article/2014/11/18/uk-mideast-palestinians-spain-idUKKCN0J21GE20141118
- [\[11\]](#) www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.629632
- [\[12\]](#) www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.632364
- [\[13\]](#) sadaka.ie/Articles/Briefings/BRIEFING-Palestinian-state-recognised-by-UN.pdf

Sadaka supports a peaceful settlement in Palestine/Israel based on the principles of democracy and justice, be that in two states or in one state. We maintain an independent position on internal politics within Palestine, favouring neither Fatah, Hamas nor any other Palestinian political organisation.