

American Recognition of Palestinian Statehood Today Would Reward Terror and Undermine Peace

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Every durable peace agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbors has been the result of direct negotiations between the parties. American recognition of a Palestinian state at this moment — in the wake of the October 7 massacre — would reward terror and disincentivize negotiations while achieving nothing tangible for ordinary Palestinians. The message to the Palestinian public would be clear: Terrorism and violence pay.

The path to Israeli-Palestinian peace must start with removing Hamas from power and the emergence of a reformed and revamped Palestinian Authority committed to peace. Only when these objectives are met will a true path to peace between Israel and the Palestinians be possible.

American Recognition of a Palestinian State Outside a Negotiation Will Not Benefit the Palestinian People or Lead to Peace

- Many countries have previously recognized Palestinian statehood — despite Israeli and American objections. These efforts did not advance the cause of peace and failed to deliver any improvement in the daily lives of Palestinians. Unilateral recognition by the United States would yield the same result.
- Unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state would not solve any of the difficult issues at the heart of the dispute: borders, refugees, Jerusalem, security arrangements, recognition, and the end of conflict and claims.
- Instead, such a step would reasonably be viewed by most Palestinians and the Arab world as a sign that Hamas' path of terrorism achieves results while the path of working with Israel achieves nothing. Such an action would inevitably incentivize further attacks like October 7 in order to achieve more unilateral international handouts.
- Palestinian leaders have repeatedly rejected American and Israeli offers that included the creation of a Palestinian state, and they would be less likely to accept a negotiated agreement in the future if their "statehood" was already achieved.

- This step would also alienate the Israeli public, already reeling from the most devastating attack on Jews since the Holocaust, making an eventual negotiated agreement even more difficult.
- Recent peace agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbors demonstrate that real progress can only be achieved by bringing the parties to the negotiating table and working out tangible ways to bridge differences and reach lasting solutions.

The United States Has Long Rejected Unilateral Declarations of Palestinian Statehood

- Successive American administrations of both parties have opposed efforts to recognize a Palestinian state outside of negotiations with Israel. Supporting such actions now would represent a reversal of more than 40 years of U.S. policy.
- Congress has repeatedly adopted resolutions and legislation to oppose any unilateral Palestinian declaration of statehood.
- In March 1999, with Yasser Arafat threatening to unilaterally declare an independent state, Congress overwhelmingly passed a resolution stating that “any attempt to establish Palestinian statehood outside the negotiating process will invoke the strongest congressional opposition.”
- In the summer of 2011, Congress again adopted resolutions expressing “strong opposition to any attempt to establish or seek recognition of a Palestinian state” outside of a negotiated agreement.
- In November 2016, the House passed a resolution by voice vote declaring “any widespread international recognition of a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood outside of the context of a peace agreement with Israel would cause severe harm to the peace process...”

The Way Forward

The path to Israeli-Palestinian peace must start with removing Hamas from power and the emergence of a reformed and revamped Palestinian Authority committed to peace. Once these objectives are achieved, a true path to peace between Israel and the Palestinians becomes possible.

Circumventing reform and direct negotiations — either through a unilateral American recognition of a Palestinian state or failure to veto a recognition resolution at the U.N. Security Council — would ultimately undermine genuine peace and harm both Palestinians and Israelis.