

**PALESTINIAN POSITION****Spain, Ireland, Norway recognizing Palestinian state is largely symbolic, experts say**

*'The consequences are not legal; it's more about the message,' CEO of European pro-Israel group says as Israel recalls ambassadors*



ISABEL INFANTES/GETTY IMAGES

*Spanish acting Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez during the investiture debate at the Spanish Parliament on November 15, 2023 in Madrid, Spain.*

SHARE   

The significance of the planned recognition of a Palestinian state by Ireland, Spain and Norway is largely symbolic, experts told *Jewish Insider*.

The moves by the European countries are damaging “in terms of the message it sends – commit Oct. 7 and you’ll obtain what you couldn’t before,” Emmanuel Navon, CEO of Europe-Israel relations advocacy organization ELNET and an international relations lecturer, said.

“The consequences are not legal, it’s more about the message,” he said, adding that the practical implication is probably that “instead of the PLO embassy having a plaque saying ‘Palestine Liberation Organization,’ it’ll say “State of Palestine, but that’s about it.”

Navon also pointed out that the recognition is not of a state in specific borders.

Yonatan Freeman, an expert on International Relations at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, said that “what matters more about this recognition is the timing. It seems like they are piling on to the kind of mantra we’ve been hearing from the International Criminal Court and about the Rafah operation, lawsuits against Germany — all of these things are accusations that we are committing war crimes or genocide.

“The timing is the challenge,” Freeman added, “but I think if you look at what it really means in terms of practical policy changes, I don’t think we should fear the possibility that these countries will now announce that they’re not trading with Israel or some kind of sanctions...I don’t think there will be a significant impact.”

Ireland, Spain and Norway plan to take the steps necessary to make their recognition of a Palestinian state official by May 28.

In response, Hamas said other countries should “recognize our legitimate national rights, support the struggle of our people for liberation and independence, and end the Zionist occupation of our land.”

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that “the intention of several European countries to recognize a Palestinian state is a reward for terrorism. “

“Eighty percent of the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria [the West Bank] support the terrible massacre of Oct. 7,” Netanyahu added. “This evil cannot be given a state. This would be a terrorist state. It will try to repeat the massacre of Oct. 7 again and again; we will not consent to this. Rewarding terrorism will not bring peace and neither will it stop us from defeating Hamas.”

Freeman noted that Ireland, Norway and Spain have been very critical of Israel’s actions towards the Palestinians for many years.

As to whether the move by Spain and Ireland can pressure the European Union to follow suit (Norway is not an EU member), Navon said, “There’s never consensus in the EU about foreign policy about anything. There are three or four camps in the EU on the question of the [Israeli-Palestinian] conflict. [EU foreign policy chief Josep] Borrell speaks for himself; whenever he says something, countries say ‘that’s not our position.’ There is no EU foreign policy and there probably never will be.”

Navon was skeptical that the three countries would set off a broader wave of Palestinian state recognition across the continent.

“The Spanish prime minister is a complete opportunist who is just doing this to pacify the far left in his government ... Ireland is always an outsider in terms of foreign policy. They’re still stuck in the 1970s. I don’t think this will create a general trend in the EU,” he said.

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday that President Joe Biden is “emphatic that a two-state solution should be brought about through direct negotiations through the parties, not through unilateral recognition.”

According to Freeman, “the fact that the U.S. is taking a very strong position against [unilaterally recognizing a Palestinian state] and saying we only accept it in negotiations could cause these countries to say something, but not translate it into actually doing something, because of U.S. influence and impact.”

“Just like the ICC [move towards arrest warrants for Israeli leaders] sparked a major consensus in Congress, [seeking] sanctions ... An American response can be very significant when it comes

to what these countries may elect to do against Israel,” Freeman added.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz called Israel’s ambassadors to Ireland, Spain and Norway back to Jerusalem on Wednesday, after the announcement that they would recognize a Palestinian state.

Katz also summoned the European states’ ambassadors to the Foreign Ministry on Thursday, for a meeting in which he showed them the newly released video of female IDF soldiers in their pajamas, being tied up, taunted and shoved into jeeps by Hamas terrorists.

“After the Hamas terrorist organization perpetrated the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust, after it perpetrated the terrible sex crimes seen by the world, these countries chose to give Hamas and Iran a prize,” the foreign minister said.

The European states’ decisions are also damaging to efforts to free the 128 hostages who remain in Hamas captivity in Gaza, Katz added.

“This is a tailwind for Hamas’ jihadis,” he said. “The march of folly...does not deter us. We are determined to attain our goals, to bring security back to our citizens, to dismantle Hamas and to return the hostages. There are no aims more just than these.”

Katz was in Paris on Wednesday, where he met with his French counterpart, Stéphane Séjourné, who expressed opposition to unilaterally recognizing a Palestinian state, according to the Israeli readout of the meeting.

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, responding to Ireland, Norway and Spain’s recognition of a Palestinian state and the International Court of Justice considering arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, called on Netanyahu to halt the transfer of Palestinian Authority tax revenue, which had been funneled through Norway since Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack on Israel.

“The Palestinians are acting against Israel using diplomatic terrorism and are advancing unilateral steps in the world, and I don’t have to continue transferring them money,” Smotrich said. “If this makes the Palestinian Authority collapse – so it’ll collapse. I will not artificially revive the PA in order for it to act against me.”

The EU supports a two-state solution. EU member states that were previously part of the Eastern Bloc — Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria — as well as Cyprus and Sweden already recognize a Palestinian state. The majority of U.N. member states — 140 out of 193 — recognize a Palestinian state, as well.

In March, the leaders of Spain, Ireland, Slovenia and Malta announced their “readiness to recognize Palestine,” and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said he hoped a “critical mass” of Western countries would do the same.

Belgium, Luxembourg and Portugal were originally in the EU group discussing recognizing a Palestinian state, but they left, with Belgium accusing Sánchez of using the move for domestic political needs and saying the Palestinians should reach specific milestones before being recognized as a state.

---

## Quick Hits



### DAILY KICKOFF

Daily Kickoff: Haley, Vance speeches preview GOP divide



### ON THE HILL

House committee approves 2025 defense bill, with new cooperative Israel, Middle East programs



### PALESTINIAN POSITION

Spain, Ireland, Norway recognizing Palestinian state is largely symbolic, experts say



### KEYBOARD WARRIORS

Meta Oversight Board to review post alleging all Israelis are ‘criminals’



### PENNSYLVANIA PROBLEMS

AIPAC pauses fundraising for Scott Perry, as he faces competitive reelection



### UP IN ARMS

Democrats divided on opposition to Biden arms hold