

How Should We Respond to European Recognition of a Palestinian State?

On May 22, the nations of Norway, Spain and Ireland announced their intentions to recognize a Palestinian state. As reported in the Epoch Times, the announcement prompted “Israel to immediately recall its ambassadors to the three nations.” How should we respond?

As described by the leaders of these three countries, they are calling for, “Two states, living side by side, in peace and security” (Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store), “with mutual security guarantees” (Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez) and with “Ireland’s dream” being “that the Israeli and Palestinian children of May 28, 2024, will grow up to be neighbors at peace” (Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris).

Israel’s response was harsh and swift, referencing “the Irish-Norwegian folly,” in the words of Israel’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Israel Katz.

Katz claimed in a post on X that the announcement undermined Israeli sovereignty and endangered its security:

Then, speaking directly to Ireland, he posted: *(Warning: Included video contains violent scenes of terrorist attacks by Hamas.)*

Why this extreme reaction from Israeli leadership? After all, the Irish government called for “the unconditional release of hostages held by Hamas and ‘full, safe, and unhindered’ humanitarian access to Gaza.” And Prime Minister Sánchez said that recognition of the Palestinian state was a necessary step to “empower the Palestinian National Authority against Hamas, a terrorist group that must disappear.”

Breaking news, Spirit-filled stories. Subscribe to Charisma on YouTube now!

In addition, don't most Israelis share the dream of living side by side in peace and prosperity with their Arab neighbors? What, then, was so wrong with this formal recognition of a Palestinian state?

First, these nations have no authority whatsoever, legally or morally, to tell Israel what to do with the disputed territories, territories that were acquired in the midst of defensive wars. Who appointed these three countries the arbiters of the Middle East?

Second, as the old saying goes, the devil is in the details, in this case, the details of what, exactly, constitutes a Palestinian state. Palestinian leadership in Judea and Samaria (aka the West Bank) has made it clear that no Jews could live in a Palestinian state (in contrast with Israel being home to more than 2 million Palestinian Arabs).

As noted by Eric Mandel in the "Forward" in 2018, with reference to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas's speech to the United Nations Security Council, Abbas put forth a serious proposal for a two-state solution "if your goal is a Palestinian state ethnically cleansed of every Jew."

There are now reportedly more than 500,000 Israeli Jews living in the West Bank, all of whom would have to go based on this pollyannaish vision. To repeat: who gave Norway, Spain and Ireland the right to expel half a million people from their homes?

Third, the announcement is completely unrealistic, envisioning a peaceful way to oust Hamas from power as well envisioning Abbas and the PA as serious peace partners for Israel.

As Mandel noted in 2018:

In 2014, he told the Arab League, "We will never recognize the Jewishness of the state of Israel." In 2016 in Sudan, he reiterated that he will "recognize the State of Israel, and that is it. However a Jewish state is not my affair. I will not recognize it at all and I will not accept it." In December, his chief negotiator Saeb Erekat said Palestinians need to strive to reclaim "historic Palestine, from the river to the sea." And this January, clearing up any ambiguity, Abbas asserted from the safety of his West Bank compound that the state of Israel is "a colonial project that has nothing to do with Judaism," and rejected any Jewish ties to the land.

As for accepting Israel's legitimacy and right to a state, Abbas asserts that Israel's occupation started in 1948, not 1967. This clearly means that he believes Israel proper to be occupied, not just the West Bank and Gaza.

Get your *FREE CHARISMA NEWSLETTERS* today! Stay up to date with current issues, Holy Spirit news, Christian teachings, Charisma videos & more!

This is Israel's wonderful peace partner?

And to the extent that Abbas and other Palestinian leaders call for a one-state solution, they do so with the caveat that it must include the "right to return" for multiplied millions of descendants of Palestinian refugees, thereby overwhelming the demographics and effectively ending the idea of a Jewish state.

As for the popularity of Hamas, it actually surged in the West Bank after Oct. 7.

As the "Irish Times" reported regarding a major poll conducted last December:

In the survey, 72 per cent of respondents backed the Hamas-

led attack of October 7th in which 1,200 people were killed, according to Israel, and some 240 taken hostage. Support for the attack was higher among Palestinians in the West Bank, at 82 per cent, than in Gaza (57 per cent).

About 44 per cent of West Bank residents support Hamas, the survey found, an increase from 12 per cent in September, while 42 per cent of Gazans (up from 38 per cent) expressed support for the militant group, which runs Gaza. Some 60 per cent in Gaza expressed support for the armed struggle against Israel, as did 70 per cent in the West Bank, where 490 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli soldiers and settlers since the Gaza war began.

Clear enough?

Fourth, the announcement undermines Israel's efforts to eliminate Hamas from power, instead encouraging the violent Palestinian resistance with the idea that, with perseverance, they will achieve their goals, as support for Israel's offensive wanes.

By all means, let us continue to work toward and dream about the peaceful and prosperous coexistence of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. But announcements like this are as unhelpful as they are untimely.

Israel had good reason to react so sharply.

Join Charisma Magazine Online to follow everything the Holy Spirit is doing around the world!

Dr. Michael Brown () is the host of the nationally syndicated The Line of Fire radio show. He is the author of over 40 books, including "Can You be Gay and Christian?"; "Our Hands are Stained with Blood"; and "Seizing the Moment: How to Fuel the Fires of Revival." You can connect with him on Facebook, X or YouTube.