

Open Letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Leaders of the Members of the U.N.

Support negotiation based on mutual respect. Say "No" to unilateral Palestinian State

September, 2011

We, leaders and former leaders in Europe, long for real and lasting peace in the Middle East.

We share the sense of frustration about the stalled negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian leadership. We recognize the plight of the Palestinian refugees, and we are committed to a solution that respects the interests of all peoples in the region.

BUT we are deeply concerned by the possibility that the Members of the United Nations will vote in the General Assembly later this month to recognize a unilaterally declared State of Palestine with borders based on the 1949 Armistice Lines.

A Resolution of the General Assembly would not *per se* result in the creation of a new State. But it would send a powerful political signal, increasing the likelihood that such a State will come into existence.

We cannot afford to make a mistake. Once a Palestinian State is created, there is no turning back. A State cannot be "undone" when things go wrong.

1. **Mutual recognition.** No solution – and certainly not a unilaterally imposed solution - will advance peace in the long term if it is not based on mutual recognition and respect. Israel's legitimacy as a Jewish State must not and can not be questioned. The Palestinian National Authority refuses to recognize Israel as a Jewish State. A Palestinian State should not be recognized unless it accepts Israel's existence as a Jewish State.
2. **Israel's borders.** The Palestinians claim Statehood based on the so-called "1967 borders". This is a reference to the 1949 Armistice Lines. There is no legal or historical basis for adopting these lines as the basis for determining Israel's borders with a new State. On the contrary, these are ceasefire lines only. In the 1920s, the international community guaranteed the Jewish people a safe homeland in Palestine. Recognition of a unilaterally declared Palestinian State on the basis of the 1949 Armistice Lines would completely violate the legal rights already granted under international law to the Jewish people with respect to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria.
3. **Negotiations.** Recognizing a unilaterally declared Palestinian State would conflict with UN Security Council Resolution 242, and completely undermine the existing framework of agreements since 1967, all of which are based on the principles of mutual recognition and negotiations to settle all final status issues – including the status of Jerusalem, definition of safe and secure borders and resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem.
4. **Security.** Hamas is likely to have a major influence within a new Palestinian State. Its stated objective - its *raison d'être* - is to eliminate the Jewish nation. If Hamas and its allies are effectively given the right to attack the Jewish people from within the 1949 Armistice Lines, Israel's very existence will be under threat.
5. **Jerusalem.** Jerusalem must not be divided but must remain open for people of all faiths under Jewish sovereignty. Only Jewish sovereignty over Jerusalem can guarantee that the Old City and the Holy Places will be protected. The Old City was completely closed for Jewish worshippers during the Jordanian occupation from 1948-1967, and many synagogues were destroyed and desecrated. The same is likely to happen if "East Jerusalem" falls under control of the Palestinians.

We are convinced that the way to peace is through mutual acceptance, bilateral agreements and genuine cooperation - not through one-sided unilateral measures.

We call on the international community to embrace these principles, and vote in September against recognition of a unilateral Palestinian State, thereby keeping alive the chances of genuine reconciliation and real peace.

Signed: