
Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Baskin (IPCRI): “A major Israeli-Palestinian challenge”, one State for two peoples

Palestine has declared an end to agreements with Israel and the US. Palestinian President Abu Mazen's announcement came on the evening of May 19 and was circulated by Palestinian news agency Wafa. It follows the announcement by the new national Emergency Government, led by Benjamin Netanyahu and Benny Gantz, to annex parts of the occupied territory of the West Bank, as outlined in the peace plan proposed by Donald Trump on January 28 in Washington. “As of today, the Palestine Liberation Organization [PLO] and the State of Palestine are no longer bound by any of the accords and understandings with the American and Israeli governments and by any of the commitments enshrined in these understandings and agreements, including those concerning security,” said Abu Mazen, calling on Israel “to assume its obligations as an occupying power and all the consequences and repercussions under international and humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention.” The reference to accountability for “the security of the civilian population in the Occupied Territories and its properties, the prohibition of collective punishment, theft of resources, land annexation and transfers of population from occupant to Occupied, amounting to serious violations and war crimes” is clear. This is not new for the Palestinian President, who had already threatened to do so on a couple of other occasions. The last one on 22 April, in a speech marking the beginning of Ramadan: “we will not stand hand-cuffed if Israel announces the annexation of any part of our land, and will implement immediately the decisions of the National and Central Council, by cancelling all agreements with the governments of these Countries.” Before then, at the end of January, at the extraordinary meeting convened by the Arab League in Cairo, following the presentation of Trump's Plan for peace in the Middle East, he said: “I will not accept the annexation of Jerusalem and I do not want to go down in history as the one who sold Jerusalem”, adding that the Palestinian National Authority, “will never accept the US as the only mediator at the negotiating table with Israel.”



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What is your opinion of Abu Mazen's decision to end the agreements with Israel and the USA? Abu Mazen, the man who signed the Oslo agreements with Shimon Peres, has put an end to the delusion that the Oslo peace process was still alive. Despite similar threats voiced in the past, this time it would seem more serious. In his speech, Abu Mazen continually spoke of an occupied Palestinian State and of Israel as an occupying State. Abu Mazen is right in using the terminology 'occupied Palestinian State'. The State of Palestine has been recognized by the UN as a 'non-member observer State'. This means that it can sign conventions and join international organizations. The State of Palestine has the legal right and the responsibility towards its people to be an active and full member of the international community. This also includes recourse to the International Criminal Court under the Rome Convention. Hence the government of the State of Palestine can continue to exist and 'challenge' Israel, that is infringing international law by occupying another State.

Abu Mazen can and should dissolve the Palestinian National Authority (PNA)

created as a result of the Oslo Agreement and intended to exist for 5 years until the end of 1999. The PNA can be handed down to history and no longer exist. Neither Israel nor the former Palestinian Authority can be forced to maintain relations under an agreement that has long since expired. **With Oslo, the "Two People, Two States" solution is also dead. What are the reasons for this failure?** The failure of the peace process stems from the failure of the two involved parties, Israel and Palestine, to comply with their obligations under the agreements they drew up and signed. *Palestinian violations consist in the use of violence and terrorism, while Israel's main violations lie in its failure to withdraw from the Palestinian territories, thereby preventing the creation of a Palestinian State.* Both peoples lost confidence in the peace process as acts of violence continued and took root. The US then monopolized the peace process sponsored by the international community by acting as the worst possible mediator, never remaining neutral and impartial negotiators and never exerting real pressure on the parties to comply with the terms of the reached agreements.

I believe that the Two-State solution is no longer viable. There may be no solution at all. But **this is the time to start thinking about what comes next, to start planning a new horizon.**

Could it be the "One-State solution" that you mentioned also recently in some of your articles? As I have said many times, I am certainly no supporter of the so-called 'One-State solution'. I am simply observing that it's probably too late now to turn the proposal of a Two-State solution into reality. It's time to start thinking of something completely new. **Israelis and Palestinians together? / think the time has come for Israelis, Palestinians and others to come together earnestly and work on plans that will help transform our reality into one that is acceptable and sustainable, based on equality and freedom of movement, and representing our different identities.** We have two peoples, of more or less equal dimensions, with highly disproportionate power, both connected to the same geographical area whose ownership they claim, denying both the rights and the existence of the other. **It's a huge challenge...** It is. It's about addressing issues of residence status, citizenship, governance, developing ways to express our different identities and national institutions based on equality and common government.

It's the challenge of social, political, economic integration, the reparation for injustices.

We can learn from remarkable experiences of transition from ethnic-religious-racial conflicts to peaceful coexistence. I am thinking of South Africa, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Bosnia: all of these can provide us with lessons to be read through the lens of our conflict.

Daniele Rocchi