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## French Contradictions: Macron's Palestine Play – Too Little, Too Late?



Image by Stephen Meslin.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's vehement opposition to a Palestinian state aligns perfectly with a long-standing Zionist ideology that has consistently viewed the establishment of a Palestinian state as a direct threat to Israel's very foundation as a settler colonial project.

Thus, the mere existence of a Palestinian state with clearly defined geographical boundaries would inevitably render the state of Israel, which pointedly remains without internationally recognized borders, a state confined to a fixed physical space.

At a time when Israel continues to occupy significant swathes of Syrian and Lebanese territory and relentlessly pursues its colonial expansion to seize even more land, the notion of Israel genuinely accepting a sovereign Palestinian state is utterly inconceivable.

This reality is not a recent development; it has always been the underlying truth. This, in essence, reveals that the decades-long charade of the “two-state solution” was consistently a mirage, meticulously crafted to peddle illusions to both Palestinians and the broader international community, fostering the false impression that Israel was finally serious about achieving peace.

Therefore, it came as no surprise that Netanyahu reacted with considerable  fury  to French President Emmanuel Macron’s recent  announcement  of France’s intention to recognize the state of Palestine next June.

In a phone call with Macron on Tuesday, April 15, Netanyahu predictably  resorted  to his familiar nonsensical rhetoric, outrageously equating the establishment of a Palestinian state with rewarding “terrorism.”

And, with equal predictability, he trotted out the well-worn and unsubstantiated claims about an Iranian connection. “A Palestinian state established a few minutes away from Israeli cities would become an Iranian stronghold of terrorism,” Netanyahu’s office  declared  in a statement.

Meanwhile, Macron, with a familiar balancing act, reiterated his commitment to Israeli “security,” while tepidly emphasizing that the  suffering  in Gaza must come to an end. Of course, in a more just and reasonable world, Macron should have unequivocally stressed that it is Palestinian security, indeed their very existence, that is acutely at stake, and that Israel, through its relentless violence and occupation, constitutes the gravest threat to Palestinian existence and, arguably, to global peace.

Sadly, such a world remains stubbornly out of reach.

Considering Macron’s and France’s unwavering and often obsequious support for Israel throughout the years, particularly since the onset of the Israeli genocide in Gaza, some might cautiously welcome Macron’s statement as a potentially positive shift in policy.

However, it is imperative to caution against any exaggerated optimism, especially at a time when entire Palestinian families in Gaza are being  annihilated  in the ongoing Israeli  genocide  as these very words are read. It is an undeniable truth that France, like many other Western governments, has played a significant role in empowering, arming, and justifying Israel’s heinous crimes in Gaza.

For France to genuinely reverse its long-standing position, if indeed that is the current trajectory, it will require far more than symbolic and ultimately empty gestures.

Palestinians are, understandably, weary and disillusioned with symbolic victories, hollow rhetoric, and insincere gestures.

The recent recognitions of the state of Palestine by Ireland, Norway, and Spain in May 2024 did offer a fleeting spark of hope among Palestinians, suggesting a potential, albeit limited, shift in Western sentiment that might exert some pressure on Israel to cease its devastating actions in Gaza.

Unfortunately, this initial and fragile optimism has largely failed to translate into broader and more meaningful European action.

Consequently, Macron's recent announcement of France's intention to recognize the state of Palestine in June has been met with a far more subdued and skeptical reaction from Palestinians.

While other European Union countries that have already recognized Palestine often maintain considerably stronger stances against the Israeli occupation, France's record in this regard is notably weaker.

Furthermore, the very sincerity of France's stated position is deeply questionable, given its ongoing and concerning suppression of French activists who dare to protest the Israeli actions and advocate for Palestinian rights within France itself.

These attacks, arrests, and the broader crackdown on dissenting political views within France hardly paint the picture of a nation genuinely prepared to completely alter its course on aiding and abetting Israeli crimes.

Moreover, there is a stark and undeniable contrast between the principled positions adopted by Spain, Norway, and Ireland and France's steadfast backing of Israel's brutal military campaign in Gaza from its very inception, a support underscored by Macron's early and highly symbolic visit to Tel Aviv.

Macron was among the first world leaders to arrive in Tel Aviv following the war, while Palestinians in Gaza were already being subjected to the most unspeakable forms of violence imaginable.

During that visit, on October 24, 2023, he unequivocally reiterated, "France stands shoulder to shoulder with Israel. We share your pain, and we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to Israel's security and its right to defend itself against terrorism."

This raises a fundamental and critical question: how can France's belated recognition of a Palestinian state be interpreted as genuine solidarity while it simultaneously remains a significant global supporter of the very entity perpetrating violence against Palestinians?

While any European recognition of Palestine is a welcome, if overdue, step, its true significance is considerably diminished by the near-universal recognition of Palestine within

the global majority, particularly across the Global South, originating in the Middle East and steadily expanding worldwide.

The fact that France would be among the last group of countries in the world to formally recognize Palestine (currently, 147 out of 193 United Nations member states have recognized the State of Palestine), speaks volumes about France's apparent attempt to belatedly align itself with the prevailing global consensus and, perhaps, to whitewash its long history of complicity in Israeli Zionist crimes, as Israel finds itself increasingly isolated and condemned on the international stage.

One can state with considerable confidence that Palestinians, particularly those enduring the unimaginable horrors of the ongoing genocide in Gaza, prioritize an immediate cessation of that genocide and genuine accountability for Israel's actions far above symbolic acts of recognition that appear primarily aimed at bolstering France's relevance as a global power player and a long-standing supporter of Israeli war crimes.

Finally, Macron, while reassuring Israel that its security remains paramount for the French government, must be reminded that his continued engagement with Benjamin Netanyahu is, in itself, a potential violation of international law. The Israeli leader is a wanted accused criminal by the International Criminal Court, and it is France's responsibility, like that of the over 120 signatories to the ICC, to apprehend, not to appease, Netanyahu.

This analysis is not intended to diminish the potential significance of the recognition of Palestine as a reflection of growing global solidarity with the Palestinian people. However, for such recognition to be truly meaningful and impactful, it must emanate from a place of genuine respect and profound concern for the Palestinian people themselves, not from a calculated desire to safeguard the "security" of their tormentors.

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