



HL Bill 37 of 2024–25

## Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill [HL]

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The [Palestine Statehood \(Recognition\) Bill](#) is a private member's bill introduced by Baroness Northover (Liberal Democrat).

The bill would require the UK government to formally recognise Palestine as a sovereign and independent state on the basis of pre-1967 borders. The UK government would also be required to recognise the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination in the state of Palestine. In the context of the bill, pre-1967 borders would have the same meaning as that contained in resolution 76/10 passed by the UN General Assembly in 2021.

The UK government has committed to supporting a two-state solution involving a sovereign Israel and a sovereign Palestine, and to recognising Palestinian statehood at a time when it is most conducive to the peace process.

This briefing has been prepared ahead of the second reading of the Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill in the House of Lords on 14 March 2025.





## I. Brief history of calls for recognition of Palestinian statehood

The two-state solution, whereby a sovereign state of Palestine is recognised alongside the sovereign state of Israel, has long been the focus of international diplomatic efforts to find a long-term resolution to the ongoing conflict and crisis in the region.

On 15 November 1988, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) formally declared a state of Palestine which claimed sovereignty over the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.<sup>1</sup> At present, 146 out of the 193 United Nations member states now recognise a Palestinian state.<sup>2</sup> However, Israel and several other nations, including the United States of America, Germany, France and the United Kingdom, do not currently recognise the state of Palestine.

A two-state solution for Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories was the objective of a peaceful settlement highlighted in the 1993 Oslo Accords, which is also known as the 'Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements' signed by then Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO negotiator Mahmoud Abbas.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UN Human Rights: the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, '[UN experts urge all States to recognise State of Palestine](#)', 3 June 2024.

<sup>2</sup> France 24, '[146 countries now recognise a Palestinian state](#)', 28 May 2024.

<sup>3</sup> US Department of State Archive, '[The Oslo Accords, 1993](#)', accessed 4 March 2025.



Article I of the Oslo agreement stated the aims of the negotiations between the two sides as including self-government and permanent status:

The aim of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations within the current Middle East peace process is, among other things, to establish a Palestinian Interim Self Government Authority, the elected Council (the ‘Council’), for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, for a transitional period not exceeding five years, leading to a permanent settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. It is understood that the interim arrangements are an integral part of the whole peace process and that the negotiations on the permanent status will lead to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 and 338.<sup>4</sup>

More recent attempts to set out a solution to the conflict continued to aim for a two-state solution and the independence of a Palestinian state. In 2003, a UN-backed roadmap included “a vision of two states, Israel and a sovereign, independent, democratic and viable Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security”.<sup>5</sup> In 2007, a joint understanding between Israel and the PLO agreed to resume negotiations “[i]n furtherance of the goal of two states, Israel and

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations, ‘[Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements \(Oslo Accords\)](#)’, 13 September 1993. The text of UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 can be found here: United Nations Digital Library, ‘[Resolution 242 \(1967\) / \[adopted by the Security Council at its 1382nd meeting\], of 22 November 1967](#)’; and ‘[Resolution 338 \(1973\) / \[adopted by the Security Council at its 1747th meeting\], of 22 October 1973](#)’.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Security Council, ‘[Letter dated 7 May 2003 from the secretary general addressed to the president of the Security Council](#)’, 7 May 2003.



Palestine, living side by side in peace and security”.<sup>6</sup>

In 2020, the previous US administration led by President Donald Trump published its plan for peace in the Middle East.<sup>7</sup> The plan proposed a two-state solution aimed at creating viable states of Israel and Palestine, with “equal rights for all citizens within each state”.

However, observers questioned that characterisation on several grounds. These included the potential nature of sovereignty that would be afforded to the Palestinians, the control and future of Jerusalem, and other issues long central to the peace process, such as the ‘right of return’ of Palestinian refugees. As the House of Lords Library paper on the deal observed:

Territorially, the deal proposes to grant Israeli sovereignty over controversial Israeli settlements in the West Bank as well as land in the Jordan Valley. In return, the Trump administration has proposed an expansion of Palestinian territory elsewhere, notably in the desert region east of the Gaza Strip, as part of a controversial programme of ‘land swaps’ between the two peoples. This Palestinian territory would remain undeveloped for four years to give the Palestinian side time to negotiate and to meet several conditions to acquire a form of sovereignty over the areas it would administer. These conditions include the disarmament of militant groups like Hamas, the renunciation of violence

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<sup>6</sup> White House, [‘Joint understanding read by President Bush at Annapolis Conference’](#), 27 November 2007.

<sup>7</sup> US National Archives, [‘Peace to prosperity: A vision to improve the lives of the Palestinian and Israeli people’](#), January 2020.



and the recognition of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people.<sup>8</sup>

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed the proposed agreement. However, Palestinian representatives rejected the deal and broke off all contact with the American and Israeli administrations in protest at the way in which it had been developed and the substance of the proposals including on the future of Jerusalem.

During the Biden administration, several officials including then secretary of state Anthony Blinken and President Joe Biden himself reiterated US support for a two-state solution. In his State of the Union address in March 2024, against the backdrop of the conflict between Israeli forces and Hamas, President Biden said:

As we look to the future, the only real solution is a two-state solution. I say this as a lifelong supporter of Israel and the only American president to visit Israel in wartime. There is no other path that guarantees Israel's security and democracy. There is no other path that guarantees Palestinians can live with peace and dignity. There is no other path that guarantees peace between Israel and all of its Arab neighbours, including Saudi Arabia.<sup>9</sup>

President Trump has made several recent comments with regard to the future of Gaza and potential implications for Palestinian

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<sup>8</sup> House of Lords Library, '[Israel-Palestine: The new US peace deal—debate on 27 February 2020](#)', 13 February 2020.

<sup>9</sup> NPR, '[Read President Biden's 2024 State of the Union address](#)', 7 March 2024.



statehood, as examined in [section 3 of this briefing](#). The UK's position is set out [in section 4](#). However, it is helpful first to explore UN General Assembly resolution 76/10 referenced in the bill and what is meant by pre-1967 borders.

## 2. UN General Assembly resolution 76/10

In 1967, the war between Israeli military forces and those from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria saw Israel occupy the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights.<sup>10</sup>

In December 2021, the UN General Assembly considered resolution 76/10, article I of which stated:

[The General Assembly] [r]eiterates its call for the achievement, without delay, of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, and an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967, including of East Jerusalem, and reaffirms in this regard its unwavering support, in accordance with international law, for the two-State solution of Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders, based on the pre-1967

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<sup>10</sup> Office of the Historian, US State Department, '[The 1967 Arab-Israeli war](#)', accessed 5 March 2025.



borders.<sup>11</sup>

Article 10 of the resolution also stated:

[The General Assembly] [r]eaffirms its commitment, in accordance with international law, to the two-state solution of Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders, based on the pre-1967 borders.

148 members of the General Assembly voted in favour of the resolution including the UK.<sup>12</sup> The United States of America and Israel voted against the resolution.

### **3. Proposals from the Trump administration and the Arab League on the future of Gaza**

In widely reported remarks in February 2025, US President Donald Trump proposed a controversial plan to “take over” and “own” the Gaza Strip as part of proposals to rebuild the region in the wake of

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<sup>11</sup> UN General Assembly, '[Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 1 December 2021 76/10](#)', 3 December 2021. The relevant documents cited can be found here: UN Security Council, '[Resolution 2334 \(2016\)](#)', 23 December 2016; and United Nations, '[Road map to a permanent two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: Quartet—letter dated 7 May 2003 from the secretary general addressed to the president of the Security Council](#)', 7 May 2003.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Digital Library, '[Voting record: Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine—resolution/adopted by the General Assembly](#)', 2021.



the devastation caused by the recent conflict.<sup>13</sup> As part of the proposals, President Trump said the Palestinians living in Gaza would be resettled in neighbouring countries whilst the territory was being reconstructed and would reportedly have no right of return. President Trump said:

The Palestinians, or the people that live now in Gaza, will be living beautifully in another location. I believe we'll have a parcel of land in Jordan. I believe we'll have a parcel of land in Egypt. We may have someplace else, but I think when we finish our talks, we'll have a place where they're going to live very happily and very safely.<sup>14</sup>

President Trump did not make a comment with reference to a position on Israeli sovereignty with regard to the West Bank, but did suggest such an announcement may be forthcoming.<sup>15</sup>

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed what he called President Trump's "revolutionary vision for Gaza's future".<sup>16</sup> In contrast, the Palestinian Authority's foreign ministry rejected the proposals, saying "[t]he rights of our people and our land are not for sale, exchange or bargaining".<sup>17</sup> Many observers have questioned the

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<sup>13</sup> Sky News, '[Donald Trump repeats pledge to take over Gaza—as Hamas says Palestinians will foil all displacement plans](#)', 10 February 2025; BBC News, '[Trump says no right of return for Palestinians under Gaza plan](#)', 10 February 2025; and Guardian, '[Donald Trump's Gaza plan: The key takeaways](#)', 5 February 2025.

<sup>14</sup> NPR, '[Trump pushes plan to take Gaza and relocate Palestinians in meeting with Jordan's king](#)', 11 February 2025.

<sup>15</sup> Guardian, '[Donald Trump's Gaza plan: The key takeaways](#)', 5 February 2025.

<sup>16</sup> Le Monde, '[Netanyahu praises Trump's 'revolutionary, creative' Gaza plan](#)', 9 February 2025.

<sup>17</sup> BBC News, '[Trump says no right of return for Palestinians under Gaza plan](#)', 10 February 2025.





feasibility and legality of the proposals.<sup>18</sup>

At an emergency summit of the Arab League in Cairo on 4 March 2025 an alternative post-war reconstruction of Gaza was proposed, worth \$53bn (£41.4bn) and which would allow the 2.1 million Palestinians living there to stay in place.<sup>19</sup> Speaking to the plan, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi said the plan was designed to safeguard the Palestinian people’s “fundamental right to rebuild their homeland” and tied it to the establishment of a Palestinian state saying that was the only path to “genuine peace”.<sup>20</sup>

Both the Palestinian Authority and Hamas welcomed the Arab League proposals.<sup>21</sup> However, both the United States and Israel have rejected the plan.

#### **4. Response from the UK on Palestinian statehood**

The Labour Party’s 2024 general election manifesto committed to the two-state solution and the recognition of a sovereign Palestine state,

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<sup>18</sup> See: Brookings Institution, [‘America’s annexation of Gaza won’t happen’](#), 7 February 2025; and Chatham House, [‘Negotiating tactic or not, Trump’s Gaza plan has already done irreparable damage’](#), 7 February 2025.

<sup>19</sup> BBC News, [‘US and Israel reject Arab alternative to Trump’s Gaza plan’](#), 5 March 2025.

<sup>20</sup> The Arab Republic of Egypt Presidency, [‘President El-Sisi’s speech at the Extraordinary Arab Summit’](#), 4 March 2025.

<sup>21</sup> NBC News, [‘US and Israel reject plan agreed to by Arab states proposing alternative to Trump’s Gaza ‘Riviera’](#)’, 5 March 2025.



commenting:

Palestinian statehood is the inalienable right of the Palestinian people. It is not in the gift of any neighbour and is also essential to the long-term security of Israel. We are committed to recognising a Palestinian state as a contribution to a renewed peace process which results in a two-state solution with a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.<sup>22</sup>

Speaking in July 2024, the Foreign Secretary David Lammy said that the UK was committed to recognising a Palestinian state at a time when it was most conducive to the peace process:

We want a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution: a safe, secure Israel alongside a viable, sovereign Palestinian state. We are committed to recognising a Palestinian state as a contribution to a peace process, at a time that is most conducive to that process.<sup>23</sup>

Speaking in January 2025, parliamentary under secretary of state at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Baroness Chapman of Darlington, said that the UK was committed to supporting the reconstruction of Gaza and that this needed to be predicated on progress towards Palestinian statehood:

My noble friend asked about reconstruction. We are thinking

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<sup>22</sup> Labour Party, '[Labour party manifesto 2024](#)', June 2024, p 124.

<sup>23</sup> [HC Hansard, 30 July 2024, col 1150](#).

very much about the next phase of planning in Gaza and building up its governance and security institutions. This must be predicated on tangible progress towards a Palestinian state.<sup>24</sup>

In response to an urgent question on 4 March 2025, where President Trump's proposals for Gaza were discussed, parliamentary under secretary of state at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Catherine West, also said:

We are not in the business of providing running commentary on the US role in this particular conflict, but we do share the US president's desire for the ceasefire to be sustained. Like him, we want Hamas to release the remaining hostages, as is set out in the ceasefire agreement. The UK commitment to a two-state solution remains strong and unwavering [...]

Gaza needs to be rebuilt for the Palestinians who live there. Our priority is the implementation of the ceasefire deal in full, creating the foundations for a pathway to peace. An effective Palestinian Authority is vital for lasting peace. The foreign secretary has spoken to the prime minister of the Palestinian Authority, Mohammad Mustafa, and to President Abbas, and has offered our support as their government implement much-needed reforms to build the pathway towards the future. However, the Government of Israel, as well as the Palestinian Authority, retain a responsibility to support the rights of Palestinians. Working closely with our international partners, we will continue to pursue the

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<sup>24</sup> [HL Hansard, 15 January 2025, col 1133.](#)



objectives of the two-state solution.<sup>25</sup>

## 5. Provisions in the bill

As introduced to the House of Lords, the Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill [HL] contains three substantive clauses.<sup>26</sup>

Clause 1 would require the secretary of state, within one month of the bill receiving royal assent, to take such steps as are necessary to ensure the UK government formally recognises Palestine as a sovereign and independent state on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. The UK government would also recognise the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination in the State of Palestine. Clause 1(2) states that “pre-1967 borders” has the same meaning as in resolution 76/10 (2021) of the UN General Assembly.

Clause 2 concerns the status of the Palestinian Mission to the UK. It would require the UK government, again within one month of the passing of the bill, to take such steps as are necessary to:

- (a) afford the Mission of Palestine in London status as a full diplomatic mission; and
- (b) afford the members of the diplomatic staff all applicable privileges and immunities thereby accorded under the Diplomatic Privileges Act 1964.

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<sup>25</sup> [HC Hansard, 4 March 2025, col 103WH](#).

<sup>26</sup> UK Parliament, [‘Palestine Statehood \(Recognition\) Bill \[HL\]’](#), accessed 7 March 2025.



Clause 3 would place a duty on the government to report to Parliament on progress towards fulfilling the obligations created by the bill within two months of it gaining royal assent.

## 6. Read more

- [Debate on ‘Palestinian rights: Government support’](#), HC Hansard, 4 March 2025, cols 79–103WH
- [Urgent question on ‘Gaza’](#), HC Hansard, 4 March 2025, cols 165–182; and [House of Commons urgent question repeat on ‘Gaza’](#), HL Hansard, 5 March 2025, cols 255–59
- House of Commons Library, [‘Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 2023–25: UN, ICC and ICJ statements and actions’](#), 13 January 2025

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