

Palestinians Seek International Recognition of Statehood

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***Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas announced that the Palestinian Authority would request other countries in Latin America and Asia to Palestinian statehood.
(Khaled Desouki/AFP/Getty Images)***

Following a deadlock in negotiations with Israel, Palestinians are rallying for international recognition of statehood. The tactic has already proven fruitful, as some countries have recognized Palestinian statehood or have upgraded diplomatic missions.

Four countries in South America have recognized a Palestinian state in the past few months. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announced that the Palestinian Authority would request other countries in Latin America and Asia to do the same, reported international Arabic newspaper Al-Sharq Alawsat.

Palestinian representative to the U.N., Riad Mansur furthered international pressure on Israel when he announced that Arab states are drafting a Security Council resolution condemning Israel's presence in territories captured after 1967, including East Jerusalem. The news was

translated from Arabic by the Middle East Media Research Institute.

Other Palestinian officials, including chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat, are calling for international pressure as a means to break the stalemate between Israel and the Palestinians.

According to Shlomo Brom, from the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv, Palestinians have been searching for alternatives to failed negotiations for some time. He added that the idea of a unilateral declaration was once popular, but now international pressure is the main strategy.

A few alternatives to direct negotiations were discussed by Palestinian leaders since 2005, said analyst team leader Eran Shayshon, from Israeli think tank, Reut Institute.

Among the alternatives was the shifting to a one-state solution, while another was nonnegotiated statehood through unilateral declaration or international pressure. Both solutions pose their own concerns for Israel, which has strongly objected to unilateral steps by the Palestinians.

Searching for Solutions

Unilateral statehood may be a possibility rather than an obstacle, however, said Shayshon. He said the current all-or-nothing approach to negotiations prevent the issues from being solved. A shift of the stalemate to a conflict between two nations may help it progress, without attempting to end the conflict entirely.

Forming a Palestinian state without negotiations could help it bypass weak political systems on both sides that have prevented a peace agreement, Shayshon said.

“Some people are so despaired [from a possibility of a negotiated settlement], that they call for an international solution. I still believe in the ability of leaders to reach an agreement,” said Shlomo Brom, adding that the current Israeli interest is to begin serious negotiations and work closely with the American administration.

Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad is working on rebuilding economic and governmental institutions of the Palestinian Authority to prepare them for statehood when the time is right.

There was a 2011 deadline for the changes to be in place, and his efforts were successful.

An Economic Monitoring Report of the World Bank stated in September, “If the Palestinian Authority maintains its current performance in institution-building and delivery of public services, it is well-positioned for the establishment of a state at any point in the near future.”

Faced with the changes, the Palestinian public has varying opinions. According to an October poll of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, most of the Palestinians support measures including turning to the Security Council or a unilateral declaration of statehood, but most of them do not think these measures are effective.

According to the survey, 69 percent of the Palestinians favor going to the U.N. Security Councils to obtain recognition of a Palestinian state. Another 54 percent support a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood, and 51 percent support resort to nonviolent and unarmed resistance.

The poll also shows that 76 percent of Palestinians believe if they go to the Security Council, the United States will use its veto power to prevent recognition of a Palestinian state. Another 75 percent are convinced that if Palestinians unilaterally declare statehood it would be meaningless or would make conditions worse.