



Backgrounder on the Palestinians' Bid For Statehood at the United Nations

What You Need to Know

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September 2011

The Palestinians' bid for membership as a state at the United Nations represents a departure from the Israel-Palestine peace process as it has been known for the last two decades. Beginning with the 1991 Madrid Conference, which was supported by the George H.W. Bush administration in the understanding that the irresolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict negatively affected U.S. interests in the Middle East, and leading into the 1993 Oslo Accord, a framework was created for the negotiated exchange of land for peace, with the goal of the eventual creation of a Palestinian homeland next to Israel. Throughout the 1990s, President Bill Clinton devoted considerable time and energy trying to achieve an agreement.

But the failure of the peace process over the past two decades motivated the Palestinian leadership to look for other avenues to achieve their own state. In the wake of the failed Camp David II talks in 2000, and the subsequent Second Intifada, which saw the increased use of terrorism by Palestinian factions and the re-occupation by Israel of areas from which it had withdrawn during the 1990s, multiple efforts over the past decade have not achieved the goal of a two-state solution—Israel and Palestine—through direct and indirect negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

On September 16, Mahmoud Abbas, the chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, or PLO—recognized as the political representative body of Palestinians worldwide—and president of the Palestinian National Authority, or PA—the Palestinian proto-state created as part of the Oslo process—affirmed that the Palestinians would go to the United Nations Security Council this month to seek membership for a state of Palestine in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem.¹ These territories actually mark the armistice lines that ended the 1948-1949 war between Israel and the surrounding Arab states even though they are commonly called the “1967 lines” in reference to the separating lines that existed between Israel and its Arab neighbors on the eve of the 1967 war between Israel and Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, in which Israel captured the Gaza Strip, West Bank, East Jerusalem, Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights.²

This brief outlines the Palestinian push for U.N. membership, what that process entails, the likely results of a U.N. vote, and the major players involved in this issue.

Why is Palestine pushing for statehood now?

Palestinian Prime Minister Salaam Fayyad announced his plan for “Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State” in August 2009. It became known simply as “The Fayyad Plan.” The essence of this plan involves establishing an internationally recognized demilitarized Palestinian state encompassing both the West Bank and Gaza, based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, within two years.

The plan’s main goals are to demonstrate to the international community the Palestinians’ readiness for statehood, and also to provide an opportunity for the Palestinians to advance their interests in the event that the peace process with Israel continues to fail.³ It was further intended, according to Fayyad, to create a sense of momentum for the Palestinian people themselves, and to engender the belief that a grinding status quo under Israeli occupation had an endpoint.⁴

Fayyad stated that the Palestinians would present their statehood bona fides to the United Nations in September 2011. But in the face of growing discontent in the West Bank and Gaza, and polls showing significant disappointment in the leadership of the PA, the effort was seen by Mahmoud Abbas as a means both to boost the PA’s flagging credibility among Palestinian voters and to create new options for progress outside of a U.S.-dominated process that is seen as having failed to deliver.⁵ Abbas embraced the U.N. effort in a May 2011 op-ed in *The New York Times*.⁶

Support for the U.N. bid among Palestinians is strong but by no means overwhelming. A joint Israeli-Palestinian poll from June 2011 found that 65 percent of Palestinians believe they should go to the United Nations to seek recognition of their state, and 57 percent believe that the Palestinians will get at least two-thirds support of U.N. member states.⁷ The survey found that 76 percent of Palestinians believe the United States will use its veto power in the Security Council. A September poll by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion found that, while 52.7 percent of Palestinians oppose a retreat from going to the United Nations, 59.3 percent prefer to resume negotiations with Israel, indicating that they do not see the two tracks as incompatible.⁸

On a recent trip to the West Bank, some younger Palestinian activists voiced rejection of the effort. “I don’t want a PA representing me, that hasn’t held elections since 2006, trying to get a state at the U.N.,” said one. “We want a state for all [of] its people. It’s time to get people out of thinking about land and thinking about rights. I want my rights.”

The requirements for U.N. membership

The current Palestinian effort is not a “declaration of statehood” but a bid for U.N. membership. The Palestinians already declared statehood in November 1988, issuing a declaration of independence. As a result of the declaration, a General Assembly resolution was adopted “acknowledging the proclamation of the State of Palestine by the Palestine National Council on 15 November 1988.” One hundred and four states voted for this resolution, 44 abstained, and two, the United States and Israel, voted against. By February 1989, 89 states had recognized the State of Palestine. As of August 30, 2011, 126 countries recognize the State of Palestine.⁹

To become a full member state of the United Nations, a state must first submit an application to the U.N. secretary general, who then sends a copy of the application to members of the General Assembly. Then, according to the United Nations’ rules of procedure:¹⁰

If the Security Council recommends the applicant State for membership, the General Assembly shall consider whether the applicant is a peace-loving State and is able and willing to carry out the obligations contained in the Charter and shall decide, by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting, upon its application for membership.

If, however, the Security Council does not recommend the applicant state for membership or postpones the consideration of the application, the General Assembly may, after full consideration of the special report of the Security Council, send the application back to the Council, together with a full record of the discussion in the Assembly, for further consideration and recommendation or report.¹¹

A decision by the General Assembly is not legally binding unless first approved by the Security Council. This only applies to U.N. membership, however. Recognition of states is something that takes place on a bilateral basis. One hundred twenty-six of 193 U.N. member states have already announced their recognition of an independent state of Palestine.¹²

Before taking any decision on the referral, however, the Security Council would most likely seat a committee to examine the question, which could result in a delay in any decision. In a statement to the Los Angeles Times, Fatah Central Committee member Nabil Shaath seemed to anticipate this outcome, saying “If the application was delayed for whatever reason beyond reasonable time, the Palestinian Authority may then go to the U.N. General Assembly to ask for [upgraded status as] nonmember state.”¹³

What is U.S. policy on this issue?

The bottom line of U. S. policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is to support a two-state solution, and it has firmly stood by its position that such a solution can only come about through direct negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians.

In his May 19 speech on the Arab Spring, President Barack Obama said that the Palestinians’ “symbolic actions to isolate Israel at the United Nations in September won’t create an independent state,” indicating that any move to have Palestinian statehood recognized by the Security Council would be blocked by a U.S. veto.

The administration, along with Quartet on the Middle East¹⁴ representative Tony Blair¹⁵—the Quartet is a foursome of nations and international and supranational entities involved in mediating the peace process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—has subsequently tried to entice both parties back to peace talks based on the parameters President Obama articulated in May, while also pressuring other countries not to support the Palestinians’ U.N. bid.

Reiterating the U.S. position, in nomination hearings on September 7, the president’s nominee for Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman said in response to a question from Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT) that, “The United States is very resolved to a veto threat in the Security Council” in response to the Palestinians’ U.N. bid.¹⁶

What are the Palestinians’ goals?

In conversations in Ramallah in August, two Palestinian officials made clear that they saw the U.N. effort as complementary to peace negotiations—not a substitute for them.

Ghassan Khatib, head of the PA government media center, outlined three goals of the U.N. effort: 1) to engage the international community effectively and productively; 2) to obtain clear terms of reference for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations; and 3) to enhance international recognition of Palestinian rights.

“The Palestinian leadership cannot sustain itself in power without some sort of political progress,” Khatib said, and the U.N. bid was in part an effort to achieve some measure of progress that the peace process has not.

What would the consequences of the U.N. vote be?

A General Assembly decision can have practical effects even without Security Council approval. It could elevate Palestine’s status from nonmember observer organization to nonmember observer state at the United Nations, which is the status currently enjoyed by Vatican City. This new status would enable the State of Palestine to apply for membership or elevated status in a range of international bodies and organizations, creating, in the words of one Israeli international legal expert, “an ongoing diplomatic crisis for Israel” as it attempts to challenge these applications.

The actual consequences here are unknown, but it is these unknowns that have many Israeli officials concerned. In March, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said that Israel could face a “diplomatic tsunami” as a result of Palestinian efforts.¹⁷ Consequences could include new areas of legal exposure for Israeli politicians and military figures for actions in support of the Israeli occupation and settlement enterprise in Palestinian territories.

The PA is also running short on funds, as Arab states have not been forthcoming with their promised aid contributions.¹⁸ PA employees are on half salary for the month of September, “the second time in three months it has taken such a step because of a financial crisis it blames on donors failing to provide promised funds.”¹⁹

Is an intifada in September likely as a result of the U.N. vote?

While polling by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research reveals discontent toward the PA government in the West Bank, there is little evidence that Palestinians are inclined to a violent response to September’s events, whatever the outcome at the United Nations.²⁰

President Abbas has said that he will not stand for a third uprising, or intifada.²¹ The first intifada (1987-1993) was largely nonviolent, consisting mainly of civil disobedience, general strikes, and boycotts of Israeli products. The second intifada (2000-2004) saw the much-increased use of terrorist violence, including suicide bombings, against Israeli civilian targets.

Abbas has called the second intifada “disastrous” for the Palestinians in terms of international support for their cause. Abbas, however, has called for nonviolent “popular resistance” in support of the U.N. bid.²² Jailed Palestinian leader Marwan Barghouti has also called on Palestinians “to go out in a peaceful, million-man march during week of voting in September.”²³

Israel, for its part, has already taken measures to prepare for the possibility of unrest in September.²⁴ Hundreds of Israeli police took part in a drill in mid-June simulating large-scale protests, and the Israeli army is collecting nonlethal equipment that can be used to quell protests and riots.²⁵

What is Israel’s likely response?

Israel’s Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon warned in an interview that: “If the Palestinians feel that the international community can serve as a ‘rubber stamp’ for the maximalist demands then they will have no incentive to compromise on any of the core issues... A unilaterally declared Palestinian state will essentially tear up existing agreements and could be a death knell for the peace process.”²⁶ According to Ayalon, continuing peace negotiations after a successful Palestinian bid “could prove very difficult.”²⁷

Israel's Ambassador to the U.S. Michael Oren has also said that international recognition of a Palestinian state could put past Israeli-Palestinian agreements in jeopardy.

"We have a lot of agreements with the Palestinian Authority, we have no agreements with a 'Government of Palestine,'" Oren told Foreign Policy magazine in August. "It's just a fact, we have no agreements with a 'Government of Palestine.' It puts us in a different realm."²⁸

According to a statement from the Israeli Ministry of Defense, Minister of Defense Ehud Barak has held discussions with Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad on "all of the political and defense related issues that are at stake."²⁹

Both President Obama and the U.S. State Department have separately called on Israel not to impose economic sanctions on the Palestinians in retaliation for their U.N. initiative, arguing that efforts that hurt the PA's ability to function could end up hurting Israel.³⁰

What is the U.N. position on the Palestinians' claim?

The United Nations maintains that the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem are occupied territory by Israel. U.N. Security Council Resolution 465 (1980) affirmed that "The Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 is applicable to the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem," and thus that the creation of Israeli settlements in these areas are illegal.³¹

While U.S. presidents have tended to avoid specific statements on the legal status of the territories, the United States has voted for multiple Security Council resolutions affirming their occupied status.

Notable U.N. resolutions on the Israeli-Arab conflict:

- **Resolution 181 (1947):** The General Assembly supported the creation of Israel by a partition of the British Mandate for Palestine.
- **Resolution 242 (1967):** The General Assembly called on Israel to give up land it had acquired during its war with Syria and Egypt.
- **Resolution 3237 (1974):** The General Assembly granted the Palestine Liberation Organization observer status in the United Nations. Observer states can speak at General Assembly meetings but cannot vote. The PLO was granted additional privileges, including the right to participate in General Assembly debates and ability to propose draft resolutions.

- **Resolution 465 (1980):** Affirmed that “the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 is applicable to the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem,” and thus that the creation of Israeli settlements in these areas was illegal.
- **Resolution 1397 (2002):** This was the first resolution to mention the two-state solution, and called for an immediate stop to violence in the region during the Second Intifada.

Who are the key players on the U.N. vote?

Here’s an overview of how the process has progressed so far, and a look at the Israeli, Palestinian, regional, and international players who have an influential role.

Palestinian Authority

Mahmoud Abbas

- **Title:** President (official title: chairman of the Palestinian Authority) (2005-present)
- **Party:** Fatah
- **Background:** With Yasser Arafat, Abbas formed the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the umbrella organization for all Palestinian political groups. After the militant Islamist group Hamas violently took control of Gaza in 2007 in a pre-emptive coup, the Abbas-led PA was left to control just the West Bank. Abbas’s term as president ended in 2009, but he extended his term for another two years.

Position: While Abbas has preferred bilateral peace negotiations, he has said that the lack of action and progress with negotiations has fueled a need to turn to the international community.³² Abbas sees the Palestinian acceptance into the United Nations as a way of making the conflict a legal matter and opening the door for the Palestinians to pursue action against Israel through the United Nations or International Court of Justice, and negotiate from the position of a U.N. member.

Salam Fayyad

- **Title:** Prime minister (2007-present)
- **Party:** The Third Way
- **Background:** Fayyad was appointed prime minister after Abbas dissolved the Hamas-led unity government and declared a state of emergency in 2007 in response to Hamas’s violent takeover of Gaza. Fatah nominated Fayyad to lead the new unity government in June 2011, but Hamas rejected his nomination because it sees Fayyad as too aligned with the West. Fayyad offered to step down, as to not block the formation of a new government, but Fatah has continued to support his nomination, leading to a stalemate in the reconciliation.

Position: Fayyad set himself apart from the rest of the Palestinian leadership by telling the Associated Press that Palestinian action at the United Nations would be a symbolic victory but would not change the reality of Israeli occupation.³³ Former Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia and former Palestinian envoy to the United Nations Nasser al-Qudwa have also expressed opposition to a U.N. declaration.³⁴

Fatah

Background: The Western-backed Fatah faction controls the West Bank, and it is currently led by Mahmoud Abbas. Fatah was established in the late 1950s, with Yasser Arafat as one of its prominent founders. While Fatah came to dominate the Palestinian Authority in the 1990s, internal corruption and divisions led to its defeat in the 2006 parliamentary elections to Hamas. It currently supports the U.N. bid.

Hamas

Background: Hamas, which currently controls the Gaza Strip, was founded by Sheik Ahmed Yassin around the time of the First Intifada in 1987. It began as the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1970s. In the 1990s and during the Second Intifada in 2000s its military wing carried out a series of suicide bombing campaigns against Israeli civilians. Hamas has been led by Khaled Meshal since 2004.

Position: Hamas has maintained distance from the U.N. effort. In July, Mahmoud Zahar, a prominent Hamas member in Gaza, called the U.N. bid a “political scam.”³⁵

Palestinian Unity Government

Background: Fatah and Hamas signed a reconciliation pact in Cairo in April, ending a four-year feud. The parties planned to hold elections for a new government, but Abbas has delayed the elections.³⁶

Abbas said that any future government will be committed to peace talks with Israel. But the unity effort has stalled over Abbas’s preference for retaining Salaam Fayyad as prime minister, who Hamas opposes.³⁷

President Obama clarified the U.S. position on Hamas during a May 22, 2011 speech: “The recent agreement between Fatah and Hamas poses an enormous obstacle to peace. No country can be expected to negotiate with a terrorist organization sworn to its destruction.”

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made it clear Israel does not support Hamas during a May 24, 2011 speech: “I say to President Abbas: Tear up your pact with Hamas, sit down and negotiate, make peace with the Jewish state. And if you do so, I promise you this: Israel will not be the last country to welcome a Palestinian state as the new member of the United Nations. It will be the first to do so.”

What Palestinians think

A joint Israeli-Palestinian poll from June 2011 found that 65 percent of the Palestinians believe they should go to the United Nations to seek recognition of their state and 57 percent believe that the Palestinians will get at least two-thirds support of U.N. member states.³⁸ The survey found that 76 percent of Palestinians believe the United States will use its veto power in the Security Council.

A September poll by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion found that while 52.7 percent of Palestinians oppose a retreat from going to the United Nations, 59.3 percent prefer to resume negotiations with Israel.

Israel

Benjamin Netanyahu

- **Title:** Prime minister (1996-1999, 2009-present)
- **Party:** Likud
- **Background:** Netanyahu became Israel’s youngest prime minister when he was elected in 1996. He drew criticism from the right wing during his first term for agreeing to a memorandum calling for Israel to gradually withdraw from 13 percent of occupied territories. After his first term, Netanyahu served as both foreign minister and finance minister until resigning in 2005.

Position: Netanyahu accepts the idea of a two-state solution, but he believes that the Palestinians must recognize Israel as the Jewish national state. He wants Jerusalem to be undivided Israeli territory and rejects a right of return for Palestinian refugees. Netanyahu has also been clear that no negotiations will take place if Hamas became a part of the Palestinian government.

During a May 2011 visit to Washington, Netanyahu rejected President Obama’s recently announced plan for negotiations with Palestine to be based on the 1967 borders with mutually agreed land swaps. But a few days before President Obama’s speech, Netanyahu implied that Israel would be willing to give up a majority of land in the West Bank.

Netanyahu has currently turned much of his attention to gaining international support to vote against a resolution on Palestinian U.N. membership in September. On August 2, he said that Israel would be willing to resume peace talks based on the 1967 lines if the Palestinian Authority stopped its efforts at the United Nations.³⁹

Netanyahu made the case against Palestinian statehood in a May 24, 2011 speech to a Joint Session of Congress: “Peace can only be achieved around the negotiating table. The Palestinian attempt to impose a settlement through the United Nations will not bring peace. It should be forcefully opposed by all those who want to see this conflict end.”

Tzipi Livni

- **Title:** Opposition leader
- **Party:** Kadima
- **Background:** Livni was elected to the Knesset, or Israeli parliament, in 1999, and served as minister of foreign affairs from 2006 to 2009. Livni led the Israeli negotiating team during the Bush administration-initiated Annapolis peace process, and she replaced Prime Minister Ehud Olmert as head of the Kadima party in September 2008. Top Palestinian officials express admiration for Livni as an Israeli leader they are able to negotiate with, and they see her as a favorable alternative to Netanyahu, according to the “Palestine Papers,” a series of Palestinian files on Israeli-Palestinian negotiations that were leaked to the news channel Al Jazeera, which published them in January 2011.⁴⁰
- **Position:** Livni encourages the adoption of a two-state solution, which she sees as vital to Israeli interests, and she is in favor of continued bilateral negotiations.⁴¹ She has stated that the United Nations will not establish a Palestinian state and that a declaration in September will not help in securing peace.⁴²

Avigdor Lieberman

- **Title:** Foreign minister
- **Party:** Yisrael Beiteinu (third-largest behind Likud and Kadima)
- **Position:** Lieberman’s views on a peace solution are often controversial. He advocated a “Populated-Area Exchange Plan,” to move the Arab population to a Palestinian state. He also has said that he supports the idea of a Palestinian state in principle. Lieberman hinted that Israel would declare the Oslo Accords void—the accords were a framework agreement for future relations between Israel and Palestine in 1993—if the United Nations recognizes Palestinian statehood.⁴³

In June, Lieberman insisted that the Palestinians’ efforts at the United Nations would harm the peace process, saying that the Palestinian’s “unilateral steps will force us to take unilateral steps. It’s important for us to convey the message that any unilateral step can only harm the process, can only harm the chances of reaching a reasonable accord in the Middle East.”⁴⁴

What Israelis think

A joint Israeli-Palestinian poll from June 2011 found that 65 percent of Israelis believe that the Palestinians will go forward with a resolution at the United Nations, and 51 percent believe that the Palestinians will succeed in getting support from two-thirds of the General Assembly.⁴⁵ The survey found that 65 percent of Israelis believe the United States will use its veto power in the Security Council.

Regional players

Egypt

Long a key player in Israeli-Arab issues, Egypt's peace treaty with Israel, the 1978 Camp David Accord, forms the cornerstone of Israel's strategic concept. While the Egyptian regime of Hosni Mubarak engaged in demagoguery against Israel, it could nevertheless be counted on to keep its own border with Israel quiet and support U.S. efforts in the peace process.

In the wake of the Arab awakening, and the ouster of Mubarak in February 2011, Egypt's new role in the peace process is as yet undefined. While it seems unlikely that Egypt would withdraw from the Camp David Accord, given the economic and military benefits that have accrued to Egypt from that agreement, Egypt's brokerage of a Fatah-Hamas unity agreement in April 2011 indicated that it would less strictly enforce U.S. and Israeli red-lines.⁴⁶ The Egyptian security services' failure to protect the Israeli Embassy in Cairo from attackers on September 9 also indicated that the Egypt-Israel relationship was in trouble.⁴⁷

On September 6, Egypt's Foreign Minister Mohammed Kamel Amr announced that Egypt, along with the rest of the nonaligned movement, would support the Palestinians' U.N. bid.⁴⁸

Saudi Arabia

Despite displeasure with U.S. policy toward Israel, Saudi Arabia will not likely jeopardize its strategic relationship with the United States, and U.S. support against Iran, over a U.N. veto, as Saudi Prince Turki Al-Faisal stated in an op-ed in *The Washington Post*.⁴⁹ "There would be disastrous consequences for U.S.-Saudi relations if the U.S. vetoes U.N. recognition of a Palestinian state," Al-Faisal threatened in the June article. Al Faisal reiterated these threats in a September 12 op-ed in *The New York Times*.⁵⁰

Turkey

The Israel-Turkey relationship, after deepening ties through the 1990s and early 2000s, has taken a nosedive in the wake of Israel's Cast Lead operation in Gaza in late 2008 and the deaths of Turkish activists on the Gaza flotilla in May 2010. Turkish

Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan has given his strong support to the Palestinians' U.N. bid, telling the Arab League on September 12 that "Recognizing the Palestinian state is not an option, it is an obligation."

Jordan

On September 13, Jordanian foreign minister said that his country supports a Palestinian drive for recognition at the United Nations but that the "best way" to attain statehood is through "direct negotiations" with Israel.⁵²

Arab League

The Arab League—a regional organization of Arab states in North and Northeast Africa and Southwest Asia—issued a statement on July 14, 2011, supporting a Palestinian plan to seek full U.N. membership.⁵³ During a July meeting, the foreign ministers comprising the league formed a committee to deal with procedural issues related to a resolution, and another committee to rally international support. The league stated that "Comprehensive and just peace with Israel will not be accomplished unless Israel withdraws from all occupied Arab territories."

U.S. and multilateral players

President Obama

President Obama declared support for the Israeli-Palestinian borders to be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed land swaps in a May 19 speech. President Obama has repeatedly stressed the need for a return to peace negotiations, and has made clear he will oppose the Palestinians at the United Nations.

U.S. Congress

Congress remains very supportive of America's relationship with Israel. By a 407-6 vote in early July the House supported a nonbinding resolution that rejects unilateral Palestinian action at the United Nations and calls for the reconsideration of aid to the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian Anti-Terrorist Act of 2006 requires that aid to the Palestinians be conditional on their acknowledgement of Israel's right to exist, renunciation of violence, and promise to abide by previous agreements.

U.N. Security Council

The U.N. Security Council is expected to meet on July 26, 2011 to discuss a resolution for Palestinian recognition. After this meeting, there will be a clearer understanding of how the major players will vote on the declaration. As permanent members of the 15-member Security Council, the United States, Great Britain, France, Russia, and

China have the ability to veto a resolution. The United States will almost positively veto, while Russia and China are likely to support it. It remains unclear which way Great Britain and France will vote.

European Union

The European Union is working to establish a common position to take on unilateral statehood, but traditional internal splits on the Israeli-Palestinian issue make this difficult.⁵⁴ The European Union is viewed by the United States, Palestinians, and Israelis as the key battleground for the September vote.

EU Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton met with Abbas and Netanyahu in mid-June. Ashton had sent a letter to the Quartet in June requesting that they accept the pre-1967 borders as a start for negotiations. On September 12, Ashton said that there was still no unified European position on the Palestinian bid.⁵⁵

Quartet for Middle East Peace

The Quartet for Middle East Peace was established in 2002 to end the Arab-Israeli conflict and bring stability to the region. The Quartet, composed of the United States, Russia, the United Nations, and the European Union, and led by representative Tony Blair, issued a joint statement supporting President Obama's May 19 speech. The foreign ministers of the Quartet—U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, EU Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon—met on July 11, 2011 in Washington, D.C. But the Quartet was not able to reach an agreement and did not issue a public statement after the meeting.

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