

**Israel-Hamas war**

## UK in talks with France and Saudi Arabia over recognising a Palestinian state

European and Arab powers push for resolution to crisis caused by Hamas-Israel war as UN conference nears



UK foreign secretary David Lammy said the Labour government would prefer recognition of a Palestinian state as part of a movement towards a two-state solution to the crisis © Karim Jaafar/AFP/Getty Images

**Andrew England** in London

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The UK is in talks with France and Saudi Arabia about whether to recognise a Palestinian state at a UN conference in June.

But Britain's foreign secretary David Lammy said on Wednesday that the UK wanted recognition to be part of moves towards a two-state solution to the protracted Israeli-Palestinian crisis, rather than a symbolic act.

His comments come after French President Emmanuel Macron said this month that France could use the UN conference to recognise a Palestinian state, as European and Arab powers step up efforts to find a sustainable resolution to the crisis triggered by the [war between Hamas and Israel](#).

The New York conference will be chaired by France and Saudi Arabia, which have sought to establish a global alliance to push for the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

Speaking to a committee in the House of Lords, the UK parliament's second chamber, Lammy said the Labour government would prefer recognition of a Palestinian state as part of a movement towards a two-state solution to the crisis

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“We will continue to talk to partners about that; President Macron has had a lot to say about that most recently, alongside the Saudis,” Lammy said.

“It’s unacceptable for any group of people to have lived without no state for longer than I’ve been alive,” he said. “The only option is two states and we will continue working with partners . . . particularly with France as we head towards their conference in New York, alongside the Saudi Arabians . . . to ensure we keep alive two states.”

Lammy also sounded a note of caution.

“I recognise there are some who see this as symbolic, and there are countries in Europe that have taken this step recently . . . Did it change much on the ground? The sad conclusion is it didn’t, and so we have always said recognition is not the end in [and] of itself, two states is the end.”

Most UN members already recognise a Palestinian state. [Several European countries](#), including Spain, Ireland and Norway, formally recognised a Palestinian state last year.

But two European permanent members of the UN Security Council taking a similar step would be considered a more significant boost to the Palestinians.

However, diplomats say the challenge is deciding when to use recognition most effectively as a point of leverage with both the Palestinians and Israel, and whether it be done unconditionally or when certain terms have been met.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s far-right government has repeatedly ruled out any steps towards a two-state solution, or to make any concessions towards the Palestinians.

He has been emboldened by the re-election of Donald Trump, widely regarded as the most pro-Israel American president, who has called for Gaza to be emptied of Palestinians, taken over by the US and turned into the “Riviera of the Middle East”.

Trump’s team helped broker a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in January, under which the militant group agreed to free hostages held in Gaza in return for the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli prisons and a surge of aid into the besieged strip.

But the fragile truce collapsed last month and Israel has imposed a [full siege on Gaza](#) and renewed its offensive across the Palestinian enclave.

Western and Arab states have been grappling with how to end the crisis since the war in Gaza was triggered by Hamas's October 7 2023 attack on Israel that killed 1,200 people.

Israel's retaliatory offensive in Gaza has killed more than 52,000 people, according to Palestinian health officials, and reduced much of the territory to rubble-strewn wastelands.

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