

EMBRACE

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The Future of Palestinians A Year After the War: Double Standards in International Norms and the Stalemate of Democratic Transition

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Introduction to the EMBRACE project

The EMBRACE research project (2022-25) collects evidence-based knowledge on the obstacles to democratisation and ways to overcome them in five regions of the European neighbourhood: Southern Caucasus, Eastern Europe, Western Balkans, Middle East and North Africa. Its aim is to strengthen the capacity of policymakers and pro-democracy forces to develop effective strategies to promote democratic progress in the European neighbourhood. In addition to research reports and policy briefs, new policy tools for EUDP practitioners and pro-democracy activists are developed based on the project’s findings. The EMBRACE consortium consists of 14 partner organisations based in 13 countries, and places particular emphasis on locally-led research with deep contextual familiarity and stakeholder access within the regions under study. It brings together partners with unique and complementary strengths as well as shared areas of interest, in order to foster joint learning and development.

Empirical data was gathered in twelve case study countries through a variety of research approaches, investigating episodes of political closure and opening to identify, analyse and explain behavioural, institutional and structural blockages, and the conditions under which they can be overcome. A new quantitative dataset was generated on the larger trends of EU Democracy Promotion and its effects on democratisation over the last two decades in all 23 neighbours.

The research is structured around four thematic clusters: the re-configurations for democratic policy shifts after popular uprisings; democratisation and economic modernisation in authoritarian and hybrid regimes; the nexus between democratisation and peace; and the geopolitics of EUDP and the competition that the EU encounters in its democracy promotion efforts.

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1 Introduction

As the Palestinian cause approaches another milestone in its prolonged struggle, Palestine faces several challenges on political, social, and legal fronts amidst the absence of just solutions and the continuation of Israeli occupation. This study aims to analyse the repercussions of the current conditions a year after one of the most violent wars in Palestinian territories broke out, which has left profound local and international impacts. It was conducted in December 2024, prior to the January 2025 ceasefire, and reflects perspectives on the ground at the time of writing.

The study examines the double standards in international norms that entrench support for Israel at the expense of internationally recognised Palestinian rights, exacerbating the suffering of Palestinians. It also addresses the internal crises within the Palestinian political system, particularly the political division between Fatah and Hamas and the stalled democratic transformation due to the absence of elections. This study highlights the negative impact of these crises on Palestinians' aspirations for freedom, justice, and political participation.

Internationally, the study sheds light on the endangered two-state solution due to ongoing Israeli settlement activities and the imposition of new realities on the ground. It underscores the importance of the international community's role in holding Israel accountable for its violations and activating international legal mechanisms such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The study is based on a comprehensive and precise scientific methodology, combining analytical, legal, inductive, and deductive approaches to provide an accurate and integrated analysis. It draws heavily on field and research sources, notably 14 personal interviews conducted between 27 November and 18 December 2024 with prominent academic, legal, human rights, and political figures in the West Bank. In addition, it incorporates discussions from three focus groups conducted in the same period with selected researchers, academics, and experts on Palestinian affairs. Furthermore, it utilises recent opinion poll results conducted by Palestinian research centres.

The study aims to provide a comprehensive vision for analysing the current state of Palestinians and their future trajectories by examining the legal, political, and social dimensions of the issue. It also calls for contemplation and action toward a better future for the Palestinian people by addressing occupation, division, and bolstering international efforts to achieve justice, freedom, and independence.

2 Failure to Conduct Elections in Constitutional and Legal Timeframes

The ongoing political division between Fatah and Hamas has disrupted presidential and legislative elections, confining local elections to the West Bank without Gaza. The last local elections in Gaza were conducted in 2005. Consequently, individuals under 38 in the West Bank and Gaza, comprising about 50% of the electorate, have never exercised their right to vote in presidential or legislative elections. This means an entire generation has been deprived of the opportunity to elect representatives in line with their will, wholly excluded from shaping their present and determining their future.

To date, no Palestinian elections – presidential, legislative, or local – have been held on their constitutional and legal dates. The first legislative and presidential elections had been held on January 20, 1996. The second presidential election followed on January 9, 2005, and the second legislative election was organised on January 25, 2006.

Following national consensus on holding legislative elections, President Mahmoud Abbas issued a presidential decree on January 15, 2021, setting the dates for general elections in three phases. According to the decree, legislative elections were scheduled for May 22, 2021, presidential elections for July 31, 2021, and results of the legislative elections were to form the first phase of the Palestinian National Council by August 31, 2021. However, a subsequent presidential decree postponed the elections indefinitely, citing logistical and political concerns.

Interviewed experts offer varying perspectives on this topic. According to a civil society leader, elections under current conditions could exacerbate division and fragmentation. Furthermore, conducting elections without participation in Jerusalem and Gaza risks reproducing existing political elites, even through democratic processes. As an alternative, he suggests forming a transitional council for a defined period to agree on a transitional constitutional framework and a new social contract, paving the way for general elections as a precursor to transitional justice.

From a strategic point of view, a political scientist argues that holding legislative elections in the near future may not be a solution given the growing support for Hamas in the West Bank, potentially surpassing its support in Gaza. In light of recent events, particularly the October 7, 2023 developments, a Hamas victory in upcoming elections could lead to rejection from many Western countries, including the U.S. and EU, resulting in political and economic isolation for the Palestinian Authority and further complicating the status quo.

A differing perspective is offered by a civil society leader, who emphasises that participation in elections is a fundamental human right and not a privilege granted by the political system.

He views the prolonged absence of periodic elections without justified reasons as a form of political corruption, posing a significant threat to an already stalled democratic transition.

3 The Stalemate in Democratic Transition and the Need for a Democratic Political System

Not only the implementation of elections as the conventional avenue for citizens' political participation is not straightforward, but also the broader democratic transition in Palestine is being seen as stalled. Democracy encompasses more than periodic elections, including transparency, accountability, separation of powers, and respect for public freedoms.

One political leader asserts that the Palestinian people are being marginalized, despite being the source of authority according to Article 2 of the Palestinian Basic Law. The ongoing circumvention and violation of the Basic Law continue to hinder the prospects of democratic transition in Palestine. This is due to persistent internal divisions within the Palestinian political landscape, the absence of political partnership, monopolization of leadership, marginalization of constitutional institutions, and insistence on bypassing the Basic Law.

One clear example of this is the constitutional declaration issued by President Mahmoud Abbas on November 27, 2024. The declaration states that the President of the Palestinian National Council shall temporarily assume the duties of the presidency of the Palestinian National Authority for a period not exceeding ninety days.

According to interviewed human rights defenders, assess that the aforementioned constitutional declaration is both illegal and unconstitutional. In particular, it does not meet the legal and constitutional requirements for its issuance, as the issuance of such a declaration typically requires conditions such as the suspension of the constitution.

On the other hand, a political leader considers the constitutional declaration to be a wise and courageous step aimed at maintaining the stability of the Palestinian political system. He views it as a guarantee for a peaceful and democratic transfer of power, as well as a safeguard for the nation and its preservation.

Overall, political division is a primary obstacle to democratic transition. The division has fragmented Palestinian institutions between the West Bank and Gaza, weakening their legitimacy and effectiveness.

A political analyst further emphasises that the future of democratic transition in Palestine requires political will and genuine national efforts from all components of the political system, including the authority, civil society, parties, professional unions, academics, and intellectuals. Establishing a democratic political, social, and economic system to meet citizens' demands for justice and equality is essential. He argues that the future of democracy is closely tied to the

political system's willingness and international support for establishing a democratic system in Palestine.

4 Future Relations Between Gaza and the West Bank Post-Gaza War

The future relationship between Gaza and the West Bank is seen as a critical issue for Palestinians amidst the ongoing political and geographical division since 2007. This division, which has resulted in separate governance structures for the West Bank and Gaza, weakens the Palestinian stance against Israeli occupation. With the projected end of the war on Gaza, discussions on rebuilding national unity and fostering integration between the two regions have been renewed.

According to a senior political figure, the nature of relations between the West Bank and Gaza post-war will depend on various political and social factors, as well as the commitment of Palestinian and international actors to achieve national reconciliation. The end of the war may open doors to renewed efforts for reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas, particularly with the recognition that division weakens the Palestinian position against shared challenges. Efforts may lead to forming a national unity government that unifies Palestinian institutions. However, the lack of genuine will for reconciliation or external interference to maintain the status quo could perpetuate political and administrative division, hindering reconstruction and weakening Palestinian institutions in confronting Israeli occupation.

A new model of relations may emerge, involving interim coordination on humanitarian issues and reconstruction. International and regional actors may influence the shape of these relations by imposing political arrangements aimed at achieving long-term calm or supporting one party over another, potentially deepening divisions or fostering temporary agreements. Ultimately, the nature of relations between the West Bank and Gaza will depend on Palestinians' ability to overcome internal divisions and seize the opportunity to rebuild national institutions and strengthen political unity in a manner that serves the Palestinian people's interests.

While Palestinians are divided over the future of West Bank-Gaza relations, there is widespread popular consensus that national unity is the only path to confronting occupation and resisting Israeli policies. Achieving this requires reforming the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to include all Palestinian factions, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and holding general elections to restore legitimacy to national institutions and unify political efforts.

A human rights researcher expresses pessimism about the future relationship between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip due to the failure of numerous previous attempts to restore unity between the two parts of the homeland. He argues that the connection between Gaza

and the West Bank is heading toward an “invisible separation.” The ongoing internal division reinforces the likelihood of formalising two separate political entities, threatening Palestinian aspirations for a unified Palestinian state. He also anticipates limited coordination between Gaza and the West Bank on shared concerns—such as humanitarian aid and confronting the occupation—without achieving comprehensive reconciliation, resulting in a minimal level of cooperation that does not end the division.

A civil society leader also believes that factors affecting the future relationship between the West Bank and Gaza hinge on political will. Bringing an end to the division requires a genuine readiness on the part of both Hamas and Fatah to place national interests above partisan agendas. Regional and international roles are also significant, as conditional international support could push both sides toward unity. Crucially, the policies of the occupation and certain international actors aim to deepen the division through blockade and isolation, making true reconciliation more difficult – essentially leaving external parties to determine the form and nature of the relationship.

Palestinians view ending the division between Gaza and the West Bank as a fundamental prerequisite for building a better future and achieving shared national goals. However, attaining this unity demands sincere political will and both regional and international backing to overcome the current challenges. National unity is not merely a political necessity but also a popular aspiration intended to enhance Palestinian resilience in the face of occupation and ultimately fulfil the goals of freedom and independence.

5 Enhancing Palestinian Youth Participation in Decision-Making: A Comprehensive Vision

Palestinian youth constitute the majority of society, with those under the age of 29 representing over 22% of the total population. Nevertheless, their contribution to decision-making remains limited due to political, social, and cultural factors. Strengthening youth participation in decision-making is an urgent necessity for achieving social justice and sustainable development, particularly given the challenges facing Palestinian society – such as the ongoing occupation, internal division, and worsening economic crises.

Meanwhile, although youth represent a significant voting bloc, young Palestinians still experience clear marginalisation in political participation and decision-making, which stands at less than 1%. Social, cultural, and economic challenges, coupled with power distribution in society and certain legislative obstacles, have played a central role in this. Today, just as in the past, youth are numerically the majority yet remain politically a minority.

Promoting youth engagement in public affairs is one of the international commitments of the State of Palestine to empower young people and bolster their contribution to democracy and

social justice. This also heightens their sense of belonging and responsibility toward their community. However, various challenges hinder Palestinian youth participation in decision-making, including the political challenges stemming from the lack of general elections, political exclusion, and the marginalisation of youth within political parties and national institutions—all of which diminish their opportunities to be part of decision-making. Added to these are social and cultural challenges and mistrust issues, including a weak level of trust between older generations and youth, as well as economic challenges epitomised by high unemployment and poverty.

Despite these challenges, enhancing Palestinian youth participation in decision-making is not only a necessity for meeting their needs and aspirations but also forms the bedrock for achieving sustainable development and democracy. This requires collective national efforts, including political and social reforms, and institutional and legal support for young people. Likewise, the international community has a crucial role in supporting these endeavours, paving the way for a young generation capable of leading Palestine toward a better future.

6 The Two-State Solution: What Remains for the Palestinians

Despite Israel's repudiation and public rejection of a Palestinian state on the basis of a two-state solution, the Palestinian National Authority continues to uphold it, affirming its support for the two-state solution as a political choice for peace. According to the Authority, this solution must be rooted in international legitimacy resolutions and the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. In every meeting President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) holds with heads of state and their envoys, he consistently underscores the importance and necessity of a two-state solution, reiterating these points on the international stage, especially at the United Nations.

President Mahmoud Abbas has also asserted that the events of October 2023 are a direct outcome of the international community's failure to end the Israeli occupation and enable the Palestinians to realise their rights. He believes that ongoing settlement construction and military escalation undermine the prospects of a two-state solution. With the continued lack of a political horizon, many Palestinians are increasingly sceptical about the feasibility of achieving such a solution. They see the persistence of occupation and settlement expansion as rendering the establishment of an independent Palestinian state virtually impossible – particularly under current circumstances that demand the bolstering of Palestinians' resilience on their land more than the pursuit of statehood.

An opinion poll published in September 2024, supervised by Dr. Khalil Shikaki, Director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in Ramallah,¹ revealed that there remains strong opposition to the two-state solution among Israeli Jews compared to “Israeli Arabs.” Opposition is also very high among religious groups, whether ultra-Orthodox, religious-nationalist, or Zionist. Likewise, opposition is relatively high among those who identify as “traditional.” These groups are the most inclined to vote for right-wing parties such as Likud, the far right, and religious parties. However, secular Jews show the lowest levels of opposition to this solution. Opposition also rises among youth; Jewish youth express the highest opposition levels to a two-state solution, with a widening divide between those under 35 and those over 50.

The poll also highlighted a decrease in Israeli Jewish support for the two-state solution in under two years – from one-third (34%) to just over one-fifth (21%), a drop of 13 percentage points – while Palestinian support for the same principle rose by seven percentage points, from 33% in 2022 to 40% in 2024. Support for the same principle has likewise increased among “Israeli Arabs” from 60% to 72% over the same period. Among Israeli Jews, current support for the two-state solution stands at its lowest since the start of the peace process more than three decades ago.

On the ground, the occupying state of Israel is unlikely to submit to international legitimacy resolutions or any form of international pressure – which largely does not exist anyway. Currently, Palestinian territories are segmented into Areas A, B, and C, with the Gaza Strip forcibly isolated from the West Bank, while Israel controls 62% of the total area of the West Bank – namely, the areas designated as C. These areas serve as Israel’s strategic depth, both militarily and in terms of security. They also have demographic significance due to population density.

Additional complexities arise from potential land swaps between the two sides, with settlement blocs in the West Bank remaining under Israeli control and Jerusalem designated as the capital of “Israel.” This is in line with the stances of various Zionist parties and successive Israeli prime ministers, all rejecting the formation of an independent Palestinian state; the most recent example being former prime minister Naftali Bennett, who has reiterated his opposition to the creation of a Palestinian state and to any peace deal with the Palestinians. This aligns with the American vision of a Palestinian state proposed by George W. Bush, which entails a Palestinian state with provisional borders.

In the literature of Israeli political parties across the ideological spectrum, there is no recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people or their right to establish an independent Palestinian state on their national soil. Quite the opposite: some entities deny

¹ See <https://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/989>

Palestinian rights entirely – and, worse yet, refute the very existence of a Palestinian people, citing Torah teachings that identify Palestine as “the land of the forefathers.” This ideology is framed within a “Zionist” conceptualisation of the land as the Biblical “Promised Land,” referring to it by its biblical name, “Judea and Samaria.”

Israel’s stance rests on a so-called claim of an “absence of sovereignty” in the West Bank, originally argued by Yehuda Blum, a professor of international law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Blum later served as Israel’s envoy to the United Nations and published his view in 1968. Successive Israeli governments have adhered to this interpretation ever since.

In this same context, one of the cornerstones of the “Decisive Plan” put forward in 2017 by Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich – leader of the Religious Zionism Party, later adopted by the party’s general conference in 2022 – has an economic dimension, given that the natural resources of the Palestinians are concentrated in Area C, which remains under occupation.

The Knesset’s General Assembly, by approving on July 18, 2024, a draft resolution rejecting a Palestinian state – after having passed a resolution in February of the same year denying any “unilateral” international recognition of a Palestinian state – renders the two-state idea, which includes a viable, sovereign Palestinian state, no longer achievable. At best, Israel might accept limited Palestinian self-rule. It is worth noting that the two-state solution was initially based on dividing historic Palestine between Palestinians and Israelis. Over time, however, Israel’s vision of the two-state solution has shifted toward dividing the West Bank between Palestinians and Israelis instead of historic Palestine, based on Israel’s security and strategic interests. Consequently, what Israeli leaders refer to today are mere geographic and demographic enclaves rather than a genuine Palestinian state.

Thus, it is mistaken to believe that Israel, in all its various components, remains interested in a so-called “peace process.” Since the end of the transitional period on May 4, 1999, and the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in late September 2000 – accompanied by excessive military force that involved killing, demolishing homes, besieging cities, villages, and camps, fragmenting occupied Palestinian territories, and reimposing direct military control over Area A – Israel has implemented profound changes in its policies on the peace process.

Accordingly, Israel is neither interested nor willing to see an independent Palestinian state emerge in any form, nor will it allow for the birth and consolidation of a real, genuinely independent Palestinian entity. It does not appear that it will abide by any agreement or treaty, nor does it even “see” the Arabs in its calculations.

On the international level, the vast majority of countries – particularly those in the European Union – continue to stress the importance of a two-state solution, especially after October 7, 2023, as a means of ending the conflict. Yet in practical terms, reiterating the principle of a two-state solution has not moved beyond statements and political declarations and, at best, includes offering financial aid to Palestinians, without any serious political action.

7 Palestinians and the International Community: Between Inability to Stop the War on Gaza and Holding Israel Accountable

Amid its ongoing offensive on the Gaza Strip, Israel has committed war crimes as defined by international humanitarian law – cited in the 1907 Hague Conventions, the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, and Articles 5, 6, 7, and 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998 – including blocking humanitarian aid and food supplies. These crimes oblige the international community to assume its responsibilities to stop such violations. Nevertheless, the International Criminal Court hesitated for 412 days before its Pre-Trial Chamber I issued, on November 21, 2024, two arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Galant.

According to a political scientist, it needs to be recognised that international institutions, most notably the UN Security Council, have failed to halt the aggression. Palestinians express their frustration with the Security Council's inability to make decisive resolutions to stop Israeli aggression, largely due to repeated U.S. vetoes shielding Israel from punitive measures. Despite numerous international resolutions condemning the Israeli occupation, the United Nations has not succeeded in activating enforcement mechanisms to implement these resolutions on the ground.

The international community's role is a contentious issue for Palestinians, especially regarding the recurring Israeli military campaigns against Gaza. With the ongoing siege, recurring escalations, and the absence of accountability for Israeli crimes, Palestinians see the international community as paralysed by contradictions between human rights rhetoric and actual policy. This paralysis worsens Palestinian suffering and fuels a sense of betrayal by a global system that professes to champion human rights and justice.

One interviewed human rights activist believes that the international community practices double standards in applying international law – focusing on other global issues while ignoring well-documented Israeli crimes, such as attacks on civilians and destruction of infrastructure. Although international humanitarian law deems the events in Gaza as war crimes, the international community's response is limited to condemnation statements rather than tangible measures like sanctions on Israel or severing economic ties. Palestinians feel that the international system – purportedly built on justice and human rights – serves only the interests of major powers at the expense of oppressed peoples. Similarly, another respondent stresses that the international community plays a negative role by failing to halt the wars on Gaza or hold Israel accountable. Double standards and political collusion remain the main barriers to achieving justice. Nonetheless, Palestinians value supportive public and international stances and hope these efforts will expand to form genuine pressure to end the aggression.

According to a political analyst, humanitarian aid has become a substitute for political solutions. The international community often limits its role to providing humanitarian

assistance to Gaza's civilians instead of applying political pressure to lift the blockade and end aggression. Palestinians contend that although such aid is significant, it reinforces the status quo rather than challenging it. The absence of international accountability emboldens Israel to continue acting with impunity, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.

At the same time, the International Criminal Court's issuance of arrest warrants for Israeli leaders is perceived as an important step toward achieving justice, granting both Palestinians and the international community stronger legitimacy to act. These measures bolster global solidarity with the Palestinian cause and mitigate fears of anti-Semitism accusations, thus enabling friendly states to adopt bolder positions against the occupation. Though amassing these efforts necessitates long-term patience, they will ultimately compel the occupation to retreat. Such dynamics force Israel to face a new reality, making it impossible to resolve the conflict without involving Palestinians, and pave the way for new balances of power regionally and internationally.

In agreement, a lawyer and expert in international law states that Israel committed war crimes during its military campaign in the Gaza Strip, violating international humanitarian law and exceeding all limits set by international human rights law. Over thirteen months have passed since the genocide in the Gaza Strip, yet the international community – in its institutions, treaties, and courts – remains unable to stop it. This paralysis may be politically understandable but cannot be morally justified. It is no secret that certain major powers shield Israel by providing financial and military support, protecting it from international sanctions and court or human rights body rulings. This is the primary reason Israel continues to defy international law and disregard relevant international resolutions and conventions. Even so, rulings by international courts offer Palestinians a vital legal basis for challenging Israel on the global stage.

Another respondent explains that over time, Israel has succeeded in evading international law and disregarding hundreds of UN resolutions. It has also managed to renege on explicit commitments to these bodies – starting with its failure to adhere to UN Security Council Resolution 273, which granted it membership in the UN in 1949, and culminating in its termination of relations with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

The ICC's decision to issue arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Galant is described as a historic step. In its statement,² it deemed the move crucial for achieving accountability and bringing to justice those responsible for killing and wounding hundreds of thousands of civilians, demolishing tens of thousands of residential homes, and razing hundreds of thousands of dunums of agricultural land in the

² See <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/17878.html>

Gaza Strip. This decision underscores that Israel's immunity from punishment cannot last forever.

Likewise, Dr. Dalal Erekat, Professor of Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution at the Arab American University in Ramallah, wrote in an article³ published by the Palestinian newspaper *Al-Quds* that the court's issuance of arrest warrants is a historic achievement for humanity and for international justice. She described it as a critical turning point in international law, affirming that nobody is immune from punishment, including Israel. The warrants bolster the court's ability to restore faith in the international system and in the rule of law in prosecuting war criminals, despite Israel's and the United States' attempts to obstruct the court's work.

8 Palestinians and the European Union: Is Partnership Still Possible?

The European Union, along with several influential European nations, continues to maintain an ambiguous foreign policy toward the Palestinian issue in practical terms, despite leaders' statements suggesting otherwise. According to human rights writer and researcher Taher Al-Masri, this contradictory stance from the EU and some of its member states becomes apparent through the EU's repeated announcements of its commitment to human rights and international law, while simultaneously showing, during times of Israeli military escalation on Gaza, a clear bias toward Israel. Many view this as a failure to uphold the EU's legal, political, humanitarian, and ethical obligations.

Following the events of October 7, 2023, Italy, France, the United States of America, Germany, and the United Kingdom issued a joint statement on October 9, 2023, expressing their "steadfast and united support for the State of Israel." In it, they condemned Hamas and what they described as its horrific terrorist acts, stating that these countries would support Israel in its efforts to defend itself and its people against such atrocities. They also stressed that "this is not the time for any hostile party to exploit these attacks for their own gain."

The EU frequently condemns Palestinian resistance actions, labelling them as "terrorist acts," without recognising them as a response to Israel's ongoing aggression against civilians. This reflects a clear double standard compared with the EU's stance toward other liberation movements around the world. Despite documented reports by both governmental and non-governmental international human rights organisations on Israel's violations of international humanitarian law, the EU is content with issuing general statements calling for "restraint from both sides," without taking concrete measures to stop the aggression or hold Israel accountable – a clear disregard of international humanitarian law. Additionally, the EU remains lukewarm regarding demands by human rights organisations to open international

³ See [شبكة راية الإعلامية | حكم استراتيجي لفلسطين في محكمة العدل الدولية](#)

investigations into war crimes committed in Gaza. Some believe this stems from Europe's double standards, whereby the EU shows strong concern for Israeli casualties while remaining silent or indifferent about the large numbers of Palestinian civilian victims – including women and children – killed by Israeli bombardment.

An interviewed political leader states that Palestinians must uphold international legitimacy resolutions related to the Palestinian cause. These include resolutions issued by the United Nations Security Council, the UN General Assembly, and those from specialised international governmental organisations such as UNESCO and the International Labour Organisation, among others. He also calls for activating international legal mechanisms to hold Israel accountable for crimes against the Palestinian people. This includes using international legal tools such as the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court to file lawsuits against Israel, bolstering Palestine's presence in international organisations and bodies, and working toward securing full recognition of Palestine as a member state at the United Nations – reiterating its inalienable rights. Such measures would press the global community, including EU countries, to respect international law and comply with relevant international resolutions.

Commenting on the EU's role, another interlocutor notes that the European Union is one of Israel's largest trade partners, importing numerous Israeli products, including those originating from illegal settlements. This economic support indirectly reinforces the occupation. Since Israel's blockade of Gaza began in 2007, the EU has undertaken no effective action to end it. Instead, it frequently conditions any aid to Gaza on political demands aligned with Israeli requirements, such as disarming the resistance. Although the EU provides humanitarian aid to Gaza, it imposes strict conditions on the beneficiaries, limiting the aid's impact and increasing Palestinian suffering rather than alleviating it.

A civil society leader also points out that the EU, whether as a political-economic bloc or as individual states, cannot advance a peace process in the Middle East. The United States has monopolised the political portfolio in the region since the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991. Furthermore, EU member states do not share unified positions or attitudes regarding the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

Some EU countries, such as Germany, offer unconditional support to Israel, while others – such as Ireland, Norway, and Spain – have called on Israel to end its occupation of Palestinian land. There is also the position of nine European countries articulated in a statement dated June 13, 1980, known at the time as the Venice Declaration, which acknowledged Palestinian rights and the need to end the occupation. Compounding the situation is the weakness of the Palestinian position, as it has not effectively identified the tools and mechanisms that could be used to influence the EU's stance toward the Palestinian cause in a more positive direction.

According to a political figure, the reason for Europe's pro-Israel position lies partly in American pressure, which discourages the EU from taking firm stances against Israel so as not to jeopardise its relationship with Washington. The Israeli lobby in Europe also wields considerable influence over European governments and institutions, ensuring continued support for Israel and the justification of its aggressive policies. Moreover, strong economic and political interests – along with robust trade relations and shared political interests, especially in technology and defence – lead the EU to avoid direct criticism of Israel.

The consequences of the EU's stance on Palestinians have exacerbated civilian suffering in the Gaza Strip, where Palestinians feel that the international community, including the European Union, has abandoned them. The absence of strong EU positions has escalated Palestinians' feelings of frustration and anger; they see the world ignoring their plight. Additionally, the resulting environment of impunity has encouraged Israel to proceed with its aggressive policies without fear of sanctions or international repercussions.

Europeans are perceived as reluctant to clash with the United States in the Middle East, especially regarding Israel, as the region is deemed an Israeli sphere of influence. Western support for Israel – particularly from the United States and EU countries – is the main factor allowing Israel to act without fear of punishment. This support takes the form of military, economic, and political assistance, providing international cover for Israel's continued aggression.

Finally, the EU's stance on the war on Gaza highlights a stark contradiction between the values it claims to uphold and its actions on the ground. Amid growing public pressure within Europe, there is an urgent need to reevaluate this position in line with principles of justice and human rights, working to end the blockade and hold Israel accountable for its ongoing violations.