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# Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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Chair: Mr. Ali Ehsassi





# Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

• (1110)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.)):** I'd like to call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting 123 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. All witnesses have completed the required connection tests in advance of the meeting.

I'd like to remind the participants and the witnesses of the following. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. All comments should be addressed to the chair. For those members who are joining us virtually, please raise your hand if you wish to speak.

Today, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Thursday, September 19, 2024, the committee is commencing its study of Canada's advancement of a two-state solution.

Go ahead, Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ):** Mr. Chair, last week, I asked the clerk a question, and he told me to refer it to the chair. Therefore, we—

[*English*]

**Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I'm not getting the English translation.

**The Chair:** Could you give us a couple of minutes?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Is the interpretation working? I'm being told it is.

Last week, I asked the clerk a question, and he referred me to the chair.

Therefore, we put the question to the chair. Since I didn't get an answer, I'll simply ask you the question, Mr. Chair.

To follow up on previous meetings, have we sent a formal invitation to Ms. Albanese?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Sure.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Allow me to clarify that with the clerk, if the clerk can just tell us what happened there.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Alexandre (Sacha) Vassiliev):** Yes. She was invited whenever the members agreed to add her to the work plan for the study, and, otherwise, the invitation was rescinded once the members agreed to do so.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I gave notice of the following motion:

That the Foreign Affairs Committee invite Ms. Francesca Albanese, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, to an informal meeting with members.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Does everyone have a copy of the motion? Did you want to speak to it, Mr. Bergeron?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** I don't want to belabour the motion. I simply want to say that everyone knows that this person may have made highly controversial remarks. That said, she represents the United Nations and certainly has information about human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories. She is definitely able to provide us with relevant information. Further to the previous discussions we've had among ourselves, which I won't dwell on, I would like us to at least have the opportunity to meet with her informally.

My fellow members who are available and interested could take part in the meeting, and those who are not would have the option not to attend.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you for that, Mr. Bergeron.

Mr. Oliphant.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** I would just briefly say that we won't support the motion to have an informal meeting of the committee. In the last motion, we requested that she submit any comments she had in writing, which I think would then go into evidence, whereas an informal meeting would not. Given the schedules that we have as MPs and all of that, with the pressures right now on a very collapsed timetable, we would prefer to not have an informal meeting scheduled.

However, if members want to meet with her, that's up to them. Either she could organize that, or one of the members of the committee could have a meeting in their office. We're not in support of an informal meeting at this time, but if she wants to submit something in writing, that would be helpful.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Does anyone else want to speak to this motion? No.

Okay. I will call the vote.

(Motion negatived [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** Now, I will welcome the witnesses.

We're very grateful to have Professor Kersten, from the University of the Fraser Valley, with us here in person. We have Ambassador Jon Allen, who is currently a senior fellow at the Munk school of global affairs and public policy. We also have Ms. Katherine Verrier-Fr chet, who's joining us virtually as well.

You will each be provided five minutes for your opening remarks. We'll start off with Professor Kersten. Then we'll go to Ambassador Allen and Ms. Verrier-Fr chet.

• (1115)

Mr. Kersten, you have five minutes.

• (1120)

**Mr. Mark Kersten (Assistant Professor, University of the Fraser Valley, As an Individual):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

There is no reason for Canada to wait to recognize Palestine. It is time. Palestinian statehood is a legal fact. There are 146 out of 193 United Nations member states that currently recognize Palestine. Our allies, Sweden, Ireland, Ukraine, Norway and Spain, all recognize Palestine, but not Canada. Why?

Let me take this opportunity to dispel some arguments that have been put forward against immediate recognition.

First, some claim that Canada should not recognize Palestine, because doing so would go against our NATO and G7 allies. However, Sweden, Norway and Spain are NATO members, so too are Poland and Czechia, which all recognize Palestine. G7 countries, like France and Japan, have likewise moved closer to recognizing Palestinian statehood. In the May vote at the UN General Assembly, only the United States of the G7 voted against Palestinian statehood.

Second, it is said that recognizing Palestine as a state is a "reward for Hamas and terrorism". This argument is both duplicitous

and, frankly, dangerous. It relies on an assumption that Palestinians are, themselves, Hamas or supporters of terrorism, a notion that drives the collective punishment of Palestinian civilians and is used regularly to justify atrocities.

Recognition is not a reward, nor is recognition a consolation for the relentless and well-documented war crimes and crimes against humanity committed against the Palestinian people. Self-determination is a basic and inalienable human right. It is the right of Palestinians.

The international covenants on civil and political rights, and on economic, social and cultural rights—both treaties Canada signed and ratified—list the right of all peoples to self-determination. They do so in article 1.

Third, some say that recognizing Palestine as a state would undermine the prospects of a negotiated two-state solution. There's no evidence for this proposition. What has undermined the two-state solution are the atrocities of Hamas and Israel, neither of which are interested in a Palestinian state existing beside Israel. It is hard not to conclude that the argument that recognition can only be achieved if Israel agrees to it through negotiation is a cover to permit the continued destruction and annexation of Palestinian land.

Recognizing two states cannot undermine a two-state solution. Rather, it might just jump-start a new, better and more promising political solution to the conflict in the Middle East. Spain, our ally, has said that recognizing Palestine is "the only way of advancing towards what everyone recognises as the only possible solution to achieve a peaceful future, one of a Palestinian state that lives side by side with the Israeli state in peace and security". Why can Canada not do the same?

As the International Court of Justice has ruled, the right to self-determination is not conditional on a non-existent peace process. Canada cannot condition the right of Palestinians to self-determination on the interests of a government openly engaged in the destruction and illegal occupation of Palestine.

Finally, some say recognizing Palestine is wrong, because it departs from long-standing Canadian policy. What justifies the same policy in the face of mass slaughter?

Canada should depart from long-standing policy. Otherwise, it risks doing the same thing over and over again and saying the same things over and over again while expecting a different result. The status quo isn't fit for purpose. Recognizing Palestine now should be easy for Canada. Palestine exists. We'd only be joining our allies. Indeed, there are no good arguments not to recognize Palestine. There is no reason for delay.

Let me leave you with an image. It's 15 years from now, and the world is coming to terms with its inaction in the face of atrocities committed against civilians in Gaza. Canadian members of Parliament stand in the House of Commons to recognize a day of mourning for the tens of thousands of lives lost. Perhaps the Prime Minister apologizes on national television for not doing more, when we all knew and we all watched the massacres take place. What will you say to your children or grandchildren who ask you then, "What did you do?"

Canada has an opportunity to do something no Canadian government has done before, and something that is legally, politically and diplomatically the right thing to do. This committee has voted to study the quickest path to recognition. The quickest path is the one that you take today. The time has now come to recognize Palestine.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Professor Kersten.

We now move to Ambassador Allen for five minutes.

**Mr. Jon Allen (Senior Fellow, Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy and Former Canadian Ambassador to Israel (2006-10), As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me open by saying that I'm Jewish. My wife is the child of Holocaust survivors. I have a sister, nieces and nephews who live in Israel within kilometres of the Lebanese border and daily fire from Hezbollah rockets. For me, Israel's existence and security are fundamental.

That's precisely why everything I'm going to say is premised on my strongly held belief that "two states for two peoples" is the only solution that can end the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, and ultimately bring security and safety to both. The greatest threat to Israel is from within, and it will never be secure as long as it continues to occupy the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza.

Indeed, two states and the illegality of Israeli settlements—which are among the greatest obstacles to two states—have been central to the foreign policies of Canada and its western allies for decades. Unfortunately, our governments have done little to nothing to prevent settlement expansion or advance the goal of two states. As I understand it, however, one of the main objectives of the committee today is to discuss recognition of a Palestinian state.

First, let me say that recognition of a Palestinian state is not about peace in the region today or even tomorrow. Few people in Israel or Palestine can focus on two states right now. Israelis are still experiencing a collective national trauma over the events of October 7 and remain focused on their hostages, soldiers, evacuees and highly unpopular government. Palestinians are suffering their greatest tragedy since the Nakba in Gaza, and violence and fear pervade the West Bank.

Recognizing a Palestinian state now is about sending a message of hope and commitment to Palestinians and sending a clear message to Israel and others that simply managing the conflict—Israel's policy for the last 17 years—is not an option and never was. If October 7 has taught us one thing, it's that continuing to occupy Palestine and Palestinians without creating a pathway to end the conflict can only end badly for both peoples.

Why do I support early recognition of a Palestinian state?

I believe the Palestinian people desperately need a horizon for peace and a clear path forward if the Palestinian Authority is to revitalize itself and begin to fully govern as a state.

Moreover, recognizing a Palestinian state now would confirm that Palestinians are a legitimate national people deserving of the same rights and responsibilities as Jewish Israelis. It would demonstrate to Palestinians that the international community's words regarding two states, settlement expansion and violence are being translated into action and commitment. Such recognition doesn't obviate the need for new governments in Israel and Palestine. It still requires a willingness to compromise on both sides. It doesn't mean the final status issues to be resolved between Israel and Palestine have been resolved, but it sends a clear message that this is where Canada and the international community are committed to going, and that Israelis and Palestinians must move in that direction too.

Third, it would give hope to a people who—following 57 years of occupation, the current death and destruction in Gaza and the continuing violence in the West Bank—desperately need a signal that the international community does not consider all Gazans to be "Hamassniks" and does not consider all Palestinians to be supporters of violence. Hope and a path forward to end the conflict can do much to reduce violence and offer the next generation of Palestinians and Israelis an alternative future.

Fourth, it sends a signal that Israel does not have a veto over the future of the Palestinian people.

● (1125)

Should Israel have a say in the future of the region? Of course it should. Does it have the right to peace and security in this dangerous and unforgiving region? Absolutely. Will negotiations over the final status issues be difficult? Undoubtedly, but the Palestinians are not schoolchildren who must do all their homework, change leadership, end corruption, hold elections and agree to final borders before Israelis are prepared to even begin talking peace.

Who challenges Israel when its prime minister holds up a map at the United Nations that pictures Israel stretching from the Mediterranean to the Jordan? Who conditions support for Israel when its government's coalition agreement provides for the annexation of the West Bank or when its ministers and MKs advocate resettling Gaza?

As was just mentioned, 146 of 193 UN member states already recognize a Palestinian state, including 14 EU members. Others, including Belgium, are considering it. Canada has consulted with Australia and New Zealand, who are also considering the question. The U.S. and the U.K. have asked for recommendations. Clearly, the train is leaving the station. In my view, Canada and its closest allies, all of whom support two states—even more now, post-October 7, than before—should all get on board that train.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm happy to take your questions on this issue and on the issue of two states more generally.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Allen.

We now go to Ms. Katherine Verrier-Fréchette.

You have five minutes before we open it up to questions from the members.

**Ms. Katherine Verrier-Frechette (As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, esteemed members of this committee and Canadian citizens as well.

It is an honour to be here today. I am speaking from the Middle East, where I live and work at this time. I have agreed to appear today to present my point of view regarding the two-state solution and whether the international community, in particular Canada, can still support it and usher in an era of peace and security with a Palestinian state and an Israeli state living side by side.

I am speaking today as an individual, and the views I present here are my own and only my own.

I am a former Canadian diplomat, in particular, a former head of mission and representative of Canada to the Palestinian Authority. I, like Canada, support a two-state solution that will end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a permanent manner. In these tragic times, more than ever, I argue that the traditional and fundamental tenet of Canadian foreign policy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be the unifying and unwavering vision for the future that Canada brings back to the forefront: a negotiated solution between Israelis and Palestinians on the basis of two states, an Israeli state and a Palestinian state, living side by side in peace and security.

The current tragedy offers a sobering view of what an alternative future would hold if Israelis, Palestinians and the international community fail to work towards this unifying objective. This would be a future of objectionable violence, even more so than what we have been witnessing. In this future, extremists on both sides prevail and terrorism flourishes.

This alternative would fail to deliver a state for the Palestinians and would also fail to deliver any security for Israel. It would corrupt the Israeli polity to its very core, turning it into a perpetual, ever more violent international actor whose sons and daughters are

turned into agents of oppression. It would also corrupt the Palestinian polity to its very core, anchoring only terrorism, violence and destitution and stripping the Palestinians of their sense of agency, of their future and of their honour.

A negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains the only path toward the establishment of a full-fledged Palestinian state and the security of the State of Israel. This is partly because no other path has been identified to reach the objective and also partly because history has taught us that a negotiated solution to a conflict is the most likely one to be successful at resolving the conflict in the medium and long term. However, what can Canada and the international community do?

Israelis and Palestinians are first and foremost those who must decide that it is in their best interest to negotiate to resolve the conflict. This prospect is slim at this time, given the tragedy unfolding before our eyes. That said, Canada and the rest of the international community can play a role to try to usher in a path leading to negotiations.

I am outlining here a handful of strategic ideas that can potentially ground Canada's foreign policy. These ideas are not exhaustive, and none of these ideas would be sufficient to bring about a path towards negotiation and Palestinian statehood. However, they do represent tools in our foreign-policy tool box, options that we are not exploring today and should be exploring.

The first of these options is a framework with clear parameters for a two-state solution.

● (1130)

**The Chair:** Ms. Verrier-Fréchette, you're over time already. You're almost a minute over time.

**Ms. Katherine Verrier-Frechette:** Can you give me one more minute to just outline my ideas, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Sure. I can give you another 30 seconds.

**Ms. Katherine Verrier-Frechette:** Thank you so much.

The first option is a framework with clear parameters for a two-state solution with the United Nations Security Council. A United Nations Security Council resolution is the only international tool in the tool box to actually implement and enforce parameters for negotiations. It is the only tool that has not been explored to date, and it should be explored.

The second is meaningful support for the capabilities of a Palestinian state to govern itself as a state.

The third is strong steps against extremists—Palestinian and Israeli—which can include further political and legal actions against violent settlers and their leaders, as well as political representatives in the Knesset and government.

The fourth is strong support for moderate voices on both sides.

The fifth—

**The Chair:** Excuse me. I'm going to have to cut you off. I've made my point. You have every opportunity to provide us with written submissions should it not come up when the members ask you questions.

For the first round, there are four minutes each, and we start with MP Morantz.

**Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC):** Thank you Mr. Chair.

I want to thank Ms. Verrier-Fréchette for her testimony.

When we're looking at this issue, I think it's important.... If people are just tuning in now, they might be under the incorrect notion that this conversation has never taken place before, but there have been many attempts in modern history to make peace and to have two states.

Some examples are the United Nations partition plan, which led to the establishment of the State of Israel; the Camp David accords; the Madrid conference; the Oslo accords; and the Camp David summit.

Even though this wasn't a peace negotiation, I think you could argue that it was a precursor to what happened on October 7: the decision of the Sharon government to disengage from Gaza. There were Israeli citizens living there. The Israeli government actually went there, dismantled settlements of its own citizens and moved them back into Israel.

There have been very legitimate, sincere attempts over the years by the Israeli government to make peace and to have two states living side by side in peace and security. Would you not agree, Ms. Verrier-Fréchette?

**Ms. Katherine Verrier-Fréchette:** I think that much more could have been done. I think there is still an opportunity for the international community to do much more.

That being said, Palestinians and Israelis have made a lot of efforts. Is this sufficient? I think, as we see now, it was not. It has not been sufficient.

• (1135)

**Mr. Marty Morantz:** With respect to the issue of what happened on October 7—the worst massacre of the Jewish people since the Holocaust—I hear people around this table saying, “Well, Canada should just recognize a Palestinian state.”

Wouldn't that be rewarding terrorism? The long-standing position of Global Affairs Canada is that terrorism must be rejected as a means for achieving political ends. However, here we are, just barely a year since these atrocities took place, and for some reason, this committee saw fit to hold these meetings to reward Hamas for committing these terrible atrocities.

Would you agree that this is improper?

**Ms. Katherine Verrier-Fréchette:** I do agree that the massacres and the tragedy of October were the most horrible things since the Holocaust. You will not get any dispute on that from me.

Is there a benefit to discussing the issue? I do believe that there is a benefit to debate between citizens.

My position is that Israelis and Palestinians would greatly benefit from negotiating towards the establishment of a Palestinian state and an Israeli state living in peace and security. Is the moment now ripe for these negotiations? It might be naive to think so, but I do think that we have tools in our tool box to press for this outcome of a negotiated settlement.

**Mr. Marty Morantz:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We next go to MP Alghabra.

You have four minutes.

I would ask the witnesses to look up. If they're very close to the time, I will be holding up a sign, which means you should be wrapping it up soon.

MP Alghabra.

**Hon. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, let me applaud the witnesses today for your thoughtful interventions. This is going to help the committee tremendously in our efforts to write a report at the end of this study.

Maybe I'll start with Professor Kersten.

My first question to you is this: Do you see the right of self-determination for Palestinians as a fundamental right or a conditional right?

**Mr. Mark Kersten:** It's a fundamental right, and it's an inalienable right, meaning that it cannot legally be held conditional on anything.

**Hon. Omar Alghabra:** One then asks, if it is a fundamental right, why hasn't the Palestinian state been recognized by many, especially western, countries? Today, I would argue one of the reasons is that, 30 years ago, there were the Oslo accords that started a process that seemed to have a light at the end of the tunnel.

What changed now? Why do you think now is the right time for that policy to pivot?

**Mr. Mark Kersten:** I would quote my colleague former ambassador Allen in saying that recognizing Palestinian statehood is important because it provides a “horizon for peace”. There is an extreme shortage of hope for the Palestinian people. I think that's obvious in the way they speak about what they have endured for many decades now.

I think it's incumbent on states that retain hope and peace, and that retain hope and justice, to act in accordance with both peace and justice. I think providing people who have been stripped of their hope with a degree of hope that a two-state solution is in fact possible is critically important at this moment. One way of doing so is to actually recognize the Palestinian state now and then to continue the hard work of negotiating the parameters of what those two states look like.

**Hon. Omar Alghabra:** Thank you.

Mr. Allen, my question is for you.

There appears to be confusion between a political recognition of the state of Palestine and a final status resolution or end to the conflict. Can you help us differentiate between a political recognition of the state of Palestine and the fact of the matter that, yes, there still need to be negotiations to resolve the final status?

• (1140)

**Mr. Jon Allen:** Yes, there is a clear distinction here. The fact that 146 states, including many of our EU member allies, have recognized Palestine acknowledges that difference. We all understand that the final status issues of Jerusalem—refugees, borders, security—have to be negotiated. The problem is that the Netanyahu government, for over 17 years, has essentially refused to negotiate. We can't allow that to continue. You can't have a negotiation with one side only.

I agree that there have been previous efforts to negotiate a two-state solution and they failed, but that doesn't mean that we give up now and that we never try again. It's essential that we do try again, with a firm commitment on both sides to that reality.

The last time there was a negotiation with the Obama government and former secretary of state John Kerry, he specifically blamed the Netanyahu government for that failure. Therefore, let's get both sides to the table and get them talking.

**Hon. Omar Alghabra:** Mr. Allen, I have a short question—

**The Chair:** Mr. Alghabra, you have three seconds remaining.

**Hon. Omar Alghabra:** Okay. It's a very short question. He talked about the security of Israel.

Do you believe that the recognition of the state of Palestine would undermine the security of Israel?

**The Chair:** Answer very briefly.

**Mr. Jon Allen:** Absolutely not. I don't see any way that it could. A recognition does not, absolutely does not, give any benefit to Hamas. Hamas does not support two states. Hamas does not want to see the existence of Israel. A recognition of two states is contrary to what Hamas wants and is contrary to what radical-right ministers in Israel want. They both want one state—their own.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We next go to MP Bergeron.

You have four minutes, sir.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

I thank Mr. Allen for the last answer he gave. I found it extremely enlightening about the spurious objections to recognizing the state of Palestine that are often raised.

Mr. Kersten, when countries like Slovenia, Spain, Norway and Ireland say that, in recognizing the Palestinian state, they are not recognizing, legitimizing or supporting Hamas in any way, it may seem a bit contradictory in the minds of lay people.

In your experience as a lawyer, what is the difference between recognizing a state and recognizing a government?

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Kersten:** Thank you very much for the question.

I think you're absolutely correct that Spain, Sweden and, of course, the Norway of the Oslo accords have recognized Palestine, yet have zero interest in recognizing terrorist activity or supporting Hamas.

Again, I think the question, in part, goes back to what Ambassador Allen was saying, which is that Hamas doesn't want a two-state solution. That's very important to recognize. Neither government—Israel or Hamas—wants a two-state solution. It is my opinion, having thought about this and worked on this issue for a long time, that it is the civilians who want a two-state solution.

Recognition is not in favour of the current Israeli government or any particular entity in Palestine. It is the right thing to do. It is the right of the Palestinian people, and it is the right of the Israeli people.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you.

Mr. Allen, on October 9, 2023, an article appeared in the Toronto Star following the October 7 massacre.

[*English*]

The article was titled, “The violence between Israelis and Palestinians will not end until each side recognizes the other’s legitimacy”.

[*Translation*]

In it, you stated that in the current circumstances, the two-state solution was less and less possible.

Today, you began your remarks by saying that the two-state solution was the only solution.

Could you help us reconcile these two positions?

• (1145)

[*English*]

**Mr. Jon Allen:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.



What I meant and said was that, following the tragedy of the massacre of October 7 and, frankly, what's happened in Gaza and the West Bank since, you can't expect people to be thinking about two states. The Germans and Brits, following the Second World War, could not have imagined they would eventually be in the EU together or major allies. The Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, who killed each other for 400 years, couldn't have imagined they would agree to a peace deal. Israelis and Palestinians will never get over their tragedies, but they must realize that, for their own peace and security, they have to come together. There are 7.5 million Jews and 7.5 million Arabs sharing this land, and neither group is going away. None of them is going away.

What I'm saying is that, beginning now but over time, good people in both countries will realize that continuing the violence—sending their soldiers to war and death—is not the answer. That will come, but it will take time, especially because of October 7 and what's happened since.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We next go to MP McPherson.

You have four minutes.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all of the witnesses for being here today for this very important conversation.

Professor Kersten, you spoke about how the day to do this is today. I want to reiterate that a minister could recognize the state of Palestine today. This is something that does not require a parliamentary vote.

I guess what I want to talk about for a moment is the urgency of this issue. We know that, over the past few weeks, the situation has gotten far worse. We know the work of the international community has clearly not prevented a genocide from taking place. It has not reined in Israel's extremist government.

Can you speak to the deteriorating conditions, including in the West Bank through further settlement construction, and why ending the occupation and recognizing the state of Palestine would help with this injustice?

**Mr. Mark Kersten:** Thank you for the questions.

I think we need to recognize, when we're talking about a two-state solution, that the illegal occupation of the West Bank, the ongoing settlement activity and the settler violence are intended to undermine the prospects of a two-state solution in and of itself.

When we talk about the different elements that make a state a state, including controlling territory, etc., if another state—in this instance, the Government of Israel—is intentionally seeking to ruin the chances that the Palestinian people have control over their own territory, they are literally engaged in the direct undermining of the two-state solution, which makes it appear less possible. Again, I think that's dangerous and duplicitous, and we see the ongoing, everyday violence that people in the West Bank experience.

I think it's important for the committee to know that, yes, we see the bombs and the missiles, but we also see people who just want to

pick olives every now and then, who are targeted for picking olives when it's time to harvest them. They are shot and moved off their land. We see ministers openly declare that those people are right and that they would like to hand them guns so that they can commit their settler violence more easily.

Now we see the possible expansion of settlements to Gaza.

This is all open. No one is hiding these things. It's all available to us right now.

I think recognition is important as a right of the Palestinians, but it also sends an important signal that West Bank land is Palestinian land and is in line with international law and the most recent decisions of the International Court of Justice on the subject.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you very much, Professor.

Ambassador Allen, could I ask you to also respond to that question?

**Mr. Jon Allen:** As I've said before, we're at a bit of a crossroads. Israel is in danger from rockets from the north, from the Houthis and still from Hamas. Israel is in a very difficult situation and it has been for a long time.

However, that doesn't obviate the need to reach out to Palestinians now and as soon as possible. It's as simple as that. One person suffering doesn't mean that another person isn't also suffering.

I can only repeat that Israel's security can only be guaranteed... You don't have to listen to me. Former prime ministers Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert, 500 former Mossad chiefs, heads of the Shin Bet and heads of IDF have all said that the threat is from within. They are all arguing for opening discussions with the Palestinians.

As I said, it's not going to be easy, but it has to begin and it has to be real.

• (1150)

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you, Ambassador.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now we go to the second round. We start off with MP Epp.

You have three minutes.

**Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for your testimony today.

I would like to begin with Ms. Verrier-Fr chet te.

The U.S., the U.K., Japan, Italy, Germany, France and, of course, Canada.... We've been in lockstep with our G7 allies in the pursuit of a two-state solution. That has not been the question. It's been a long-standing policy of our country, irrespective of the party in power here in Canada, that a two-state solution as a result of negotiations that enjoys the popular support of Palestinians and Israelis is the path to peace.

However, Global Affairs Canada's website now says that recognition of the Palestinian state is not necessarily the last step along that path to achieving a two-state solution, which enjoys the support of all of our G7 partners. For Canada now to go about it.... I think it's a solid argument or widely recognized that perhaps Canada does not have the most influence of our G7 allies in the region, so what are the implications for Canada to go out ahead of our G7...?

I'll begin with Ms. Verrier-Fréchette.

What are the implications, diplomatically, with our G7 partners?

**Ms. Katherine Verrier-Fréchette:** I do believe that negotiations are essential to reach peace, security and stability between Israel and Palestinians. I think I made that clear. I also believe that there are tools in our tool box that Canada as a nation has not explored.

Now, Canada could play a more active role and could lead the international community in trying to usher a path towards peace and security. This would be done through a number of actions, which I've briefly outlined before, including Security Council resolutions that indicate the parameters for a peace agreement and for the negotiations.

There are actually options that, as an international community, we have not yet explored. Canada could play a more active role to lead this. Failing that, I personally fear greater tragedy—

**Mr. Dave Epp:** I'll interrupt and get one more question to you.

I hear you calling for international collaboration in that approach, yet Canada is a member of the Five Eyes. I'll expand it even beyond our G7 partners. What are the implications of Canada going ahead of even our Five Eyes allies in doing so? There must be ramifications back to our own relationships with our fellow partners.

**The Chair:** Be very brief, please, less than 15 seconds.

**Ms. Katherine Verrier-Fréchette:** I think what is key here is to keep in mind the current tragedy and to try to usher a path for peace, and this is truly through negotiations.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We next go to MP Zuberi.

MP Zuberi, you have three minutes.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today for this extremely important study.

I would like to first put the question to Mr. Kersten. With respect to the recognition of the state and recognizing a government, can you speak to how the two are different?

Many will say that to recognize the state of Palestine is to reward a group. Is that the case? Can you please elaborate on how the recognition of the state of Palestine is different from the recognition of a government?

**Mr. Mark Kersten:** Of course, recognizing a government is different from recognizing a state, and we know this as Canadians. Canada exists irrespective of which government is in power at any given time. Governments come and go. Statehood is a legal, juridical fact in international law, so recognizing Palestine as a state does not mean that Canada would have to recognize any particular government that would govern that territory.

• (1155)

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** This is the current situation in Afghanistan, for example.

**Mr. Mark Kersten:** For example, yes, and this is an important point. Canada is taking Afghanistan to the International Court of Justice over the questions of gender apartheid. It cannot take a government that may change; it must take a state. It's a fact of international law that the world has divided itself into states.

Of course, you're absolutely right that it is not a reward for anyone. We hear this over and over again. I would ask, when the point is made that recognition is a reward for Hamas or for terrorism, are we saying that our allies Sweden and Spain are seeking to reward terrorism? Of course not. That would be an awful thing to tell our allies. It is not a reward; it is a right.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** As a follow-up question on a different matter, with respect to the ICC, ICJ, other international instances, UN-ESCO and other UN type bodies, how would Canada's policies towards applications made by the state of Palestine be different from the current situation we find ourselves in?

**Mr. Mark Kersten:** You're right that Palestine has sought recognition in international institutions and is recognized as the state of Palestine before the ICC.

Of course, I think what's important to highlight there is an attempt of the Palestinian people and some leaders in Palestine to seek law and not war. International law is profoundly imperfect, but it is an avenue and can sometimes be an off-ramp offering people hope aside from seeking further violence. I think that Canada's recognizing Palestine won't in and of itself change the landscape, but it can lead to important diplomatic and legal consequences for Canada as well.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** Would it further peace and security in the region—

**The Chair:** I'm afraid you're out of time, Mr. Zuberi.

We next go to Mr. Bergeron.

You have a minute and a half, Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Government of Canada supports Palestinians' right to self-determination. Canada opposes permanent Israeli control over the occupied territories and opposes settlements.

My question is for Mr. Allen and Ms. Verrier-Frechette.

What has Canada done so far to support the Palestinians' right to self-determination, and oppose the permanent occupation and the expansion of settlements?

I put my question to Mr. Allen and Ms. Verrier-Frechette.

Would one of them like to answer my question?

[*English*]

**Ms. Katherine Verrier-Frechette:** I can briefly start.

Clearly, Canada has led a key role in past peace negotiations, including during the Madrid peace process. Does this mean we have done enough? Of course, I do not think we have done enough. I think we could do much more.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jon Allen:** I would add that in respect of the opposition to settlement expansion and the creation of illegal settlements, which is what is happening right now in very significant numbers, Canada has done something. It has imposed sanctions on certain of the worst of the settlers who are creating violence in the West Bank, but it could do much more. It should consider imposing sanctions on ministers of the Israeli government who are advocating annexation and resettlement of Gaza. Those measures are directly contrary to a possible two-state solution. If we support a two-state solution, then we should be sanctioning those who try to prevent it.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

MP McPherson, you have a minute and a half.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for that comment, Ambassador Allen. I think that's an important thing to note.

I'd also like you to comment, if you could, on yesterday's decision to ban UNRWA and list the United Nations agency as a terrorist organization. Can you talk about the impacts this will have on the conversation about two states and Palestinian human rights?

• (1200)

**Mr. Jon Allen:** As I said, we're really not talking about two states right now. We're talking about the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza, where 90% of Gazans have left their homes and some 40,000 have been killed, according to reports. Without UNRWA to provide aid and humanitarian assistance, they will be in even more dire straits. It's absolutely not clear how any humanitarian assistance can be delivered without UNRWA on the ground.

Whether or not you agree with UNRWA, and there have been criticisms of them, criticizing UNRWA for 12 employees who allegedly were part of a terrorist group is like wanting to shut down the New York police force because of 12 or 15 or 20 corrupt cops. There are 13,000 employees of UNRWA working around the Middle East. They are essential to delivering aid to millions of people. I do hope the Israeli government will consider the various pleas by governments around the world to reverse that decision.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

MP Aboultaif, you have three minutes.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses. This is a very important issue.

Mr. Allen, it's been 30 years since Oslo. Oslo was a temporary framework that was supposedly going to help achieve a final situation where peace is in the Middle East so the rest of the world can also enjoy it.

Is the Oslo framework still valid, yes or no, and why?

**Mr. Jon Allen:** The Oslo framework is still valid. The discussions that have been held over the 30 years to resolve the five final status issues, and those issues remain, are still valid. Unfortunately, the Oslo process was stalled. The second intifada occurred, which turned off many Israelis who were in favour of peace.

I don't want to put all the blame for the failure of Oslo on Israel. I don't want to put all the blame on the Palestinians. There is plenty of blame to go around, but as I said before, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't be trying again now. On the framework and the various discussions that have taken place over 30 years with Clinton, with Carter, with Prime Minister Olmert—all of those discussions and issues that were discussed and brought to the table are ready to be discussed again.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Thank you.

Do you believe that there's still support among Palestinian and Israeli people for the Oslo framework?

**Mr. Jon Allen:** The problem with both the Israeli people and the Palestinian people right now is that they don't trust each other. The Israelis fear that a Palestinian state will be yet another state on its border that is going to send rockets towards it, as Hamas has done, and the Palestinians clearly don't trust a government that is building settlements and attempting to annex the West Bank.

First of all, we need to build trust. With trust and with incentives, I do believe that both sides would begin stronger support for a two-state solution. Right now, it's quite low, less low in Palestine than in Israel, but with leaders who support two states, who are prepared to compromise and who lead their people in that direction, I think the region can get there.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** How can Canada remain—

**The Chair:** You have five seconds remaining.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Okay.

How can Canada remain a serious player, a serious broker, and what's the best way to approve that?

• (1205)

**The Chair:** Answer very briefly, please, in less than 15 seconds.

**Mr. Jon Allen:** It's not a serious player.

As Ms. Verrier-Fréchette said, Canada can show leadership right now. Actually, I think its allies are waiting for countries to step up and do the right thing. Australia, New Zealand, the U.K. and Belgium may well follow suit.

**The Chair:** For the last questions, we'll go to MP Oliphant.

You have three minutes.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all three witnesses. I go to a lot of committee meetings, and it is rare that I listen to every word that every witness says. I felt it was emotional for me to listen to your testimony and also helpful, so to all of you, thank you for your preparation, for your care and for the work you do.

I think we're agreed in this Parliament and on this committee to a two-state solution. That has been something that successive governments have said. To do that, we need two states. The question is not if there should be two states—with the recognition of Palestine—but when. We also value a negotiated settlement.

I'm looking at what you believe are the carrots and the sticks that we can provide for the two parties to have a negotiated settlement going forward.

Finally, if we can't get a negotiated settlement, what other options under international law or the UN are there?

The question is about carrots and sticks to build a negotiated settlement for Israel and for the Palestinians, and what Canada's role could be in that, Professor Kersten.

**Mr. Mark Kersten:** Thank you.

In terms of carrots and sticks, I think we need to recognize that the recognition of Palestine does not prejudice a negotiated settlement, so they do not have to go in lockstep. Again, the view of Spain and Norway for a long period of time was, in fact, that they had to go in lockstep and that recognition could only come at the end of a negotiated process. They have broken with that very belief because they no longer believe that is true.

I recognize that we want to stay in lockstep with our G7 allies, but, again, six out of seven are now considering the question that you put. They are basically considering recognizing Palestine be-

fore the end of a negotiated settlement, and I think Canada should join in that with them and try to influence when exactly that happens.

Now, it is very difficult—

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** My time is limited, so I would say that we have said it's not at the end of the settlement.

I want to go to Mr. Allen for his comments on that as well.

**Mr. Jon Allen:** Just very briefly, Mr. Chairman, what Israel needs, the carrot it needs—and it's not just a carrot—is security. Canada, the United States and others have been working to try to ensure security if a two-state solution is found.

It needs a demilitarized Palestinian state, and it needs the Palestinian Authority to begin to govern in Gaza after the rule of law has been placed there, so it needs a partner.

Of course, the Palestinians, as a government, as a state, need to renounce terror, fully recognize an Israeli state as it is and continue, as the PA has been doing for years, to collaborate with Israel to prevent terrorism in that country.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

At this point, we're done with the first panel.

Allow me to thank Professor Kersten, Ambassador Allen and Ms. Verrier-Fréchette. We're very grateful for your time and for your insights.

We'll suspend for three or four minutes and be right back.

• (1205)

(Pause)

• (1215)

**The Chair:** I call the meeting back to order.

We're very grateful to have with us here today Professor Rachad Antonius, who is a professor in the department of sociology at the Université du Québec à Montréal. We're also very grateful to have Professor Momani of the University of Waterloo, who is well known to all the members here. We are still expecting Professor Imseis of Queen's University, but I guess we'll get started.

Each of you will be provided five minutes, after which we will proceed with questions from the members.

Professor Antonius, given that you are here, the floor is yours. You have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Rachad Antonius (Retired Full Professor, Department of Sociology, UQAM, As an Individual):** Good afternoon, Mr. Chair.

Before getting into what I'd like to tell you over the next few minutes, I want to emphasize that all the sources I use are Israeli. Not that Palestinian sources are unreliable, but my sources show that there are people inside Israel who agree with my point of view. While most of the sources are critical of the policies of the State of Israel, others are not.

I would like to start by stating a fundamental principle that should guide Canadian policies and that will guide my own comments in this committee. In dealing with international issues, it is in Canada's best interest to stick to international law, for reasons having to do with both the national and the international context.

At the national level, sticking to international law provides a criterion that is objective and that can contribute to addressing tensions between various social groups who make competing claims. Referring to international law can be a good criterion for addressing these claims in a fair way. Such a stand would play an important role in toning down tensions and social conflicts. At the international level, promoting international law and upholding it has traditionally been the trademark of Canadian policy and a major factor in the high standing Canada enjoys on the international scene.

In recent years, however, Canada's clout has been obscured by positions that reflected partisan politics rather than international legality. I will demonstrate that. Canada's loss of its bid for a seat on the UN Security Council in 2020 is just an indicator of this state of affairs. In this case, the concept of aggressor and victim has been reversed in the public sphere. Everyone talks as if Hamas is the aggressor, but we forget that, for 100 years, policies were systematically put in place to take control of Palestine's land and expel Palestinians. I refer you to a book by Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, which was published in English and in French. I documented all of this in a book I recently finished, which I will table here.

In the document titled "Canadian policy on key issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict", the Government of Canada brilliantly asserts all these legal principles of international law. However, Canada has been giving lip service to these principles of international law, while actively working to undermine them. In the past, I have met with foreign ministers to express my opinions. What I did was print out Canada's official policy and ask them to implement it. Canada recognizes that settlements are illegal, but there is no serious pressure to put an end to them. None.

I'm going to quickly get to the issue of the two-state solution.

In the Oslo accords, the issue is the map published by the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions. This is the standard map that everyone publishes. It shows the territories of the West Bank and Gaza, which make up only 22% of historical Palestine. These territories were conquered in 1967, and the remaining 78% was conquered in 1949. Part was conquered under the international legality of Resolution 181 and part as a result of the war.

In practice, the entire world, including the vast majority of Palestinians, now recognizes the territory delineated in 1949 as Israel's de facto border. What happened in the Oslo accords is that the principle—

● (1220)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Rachad Antonius:** The problem is that this is the best map that was offered by the Israelis for the Oslo accords. It is a map that does not return the occupied territories and keeps part of the meagre 22% of the occupied territories remaining to the Palestinians. When Canada says that it supports the two-state solution without adding "on all occupied territories", it is counterproductive, because it goes against international law.

My time is up. I am now ready to answer any questions the members may have.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Professor Antonius.

Welcome, Professor Imseis. It's great to have you here again.

We'll go to Professor Momani.

Professor Momani, you have five minutes for your opening remarks, after which we'll go to Professor Imseis.

**Dr. Bessma Momani (Professor, University of Waterloo, As an Individual):** Hello. Thank you. I'm sorry I couldn't join you in person. I really appreciate everyone's time.

I want to focus my comments on what I think is the demographic reality of the territories we're speaking about. If we're going to talk about a two-state solution, we need to understand the people who are on the ground. Through understanding the demographic reality, it becomes clearer that a two-state solution is still very aspirational and is very much in need because it fulfills the desires of both Palestinians and Israelis. However, realistically, it becomes more and more difficult with time.

Based on both Israeli and Palestinian demographic numbers, by 2022, we had seven million Palestinians and 9.8 million Israelis. What I'd like to point out, of course, is that the Palestinian community is divided into three million in the West Bank, 2.1 million in Gaza and about two million inside Israel proper.

What's important to note here is that in the West Bank, where, again, mostly Palestinians live, we also have 468,000 Jewish settlers. That constitutes about 12% to 14% of the population in the West Bank. The kicker here is that these are both communities that are having children very rapidly, about seven to eight children on the Israeli Jewish side and a little less than that on the West Bank, Palestinian side.

Within Israel proper we have, as I said, two million Israeli Arabs who also self-identify, most of them, as Palestinian, although some will refer to themselves as Israeli Arab. Importantly, 40% of the population are secular Jews, but the population that most requires our attention, because it is also one that has become increasingly politically active and radicalizing, is the Haredi, ultra-Orthodox Jewish community, which currently stands at a little under 10%, but they are the community that are most likely, today, to want to live in the West Bank to create what are called “facts on the ground”. They are increasing in size and number. There are half a million, as I said, in the West Bank alone.

Also, I would point out that the entire territory that we have just spoken about, whether it's Israel proper, the West Bank or Gaza—to give you a sense of how small this is—is a six-hour drive from north to south and a 90-minute drive from east to west.

I say that all because one of the big challenges before us is that historically we could make a lot of analysis of what got us to where we are. Certainly, the unfettered expansion of Israeli Jewish settlers in the West Bank has now made it extremely difficult to find a contiguous state for the Palestinian people, starting with the West Bank.

The war on Gaza today has made that even more problematic. Not only do we find that 70% of all the buildings have been destroyed in Gaza, but it's very clear that we see and we'll continue to see that those extremist elements inside Netanyahu's cabinet have desires of making Gaza uninhabitable to clear the way for increased Jewish settlers today. There is no shortage of evidence, in fact a great deal of evidence, showing that. These extreme elements within the cabinet, within the political movement, although they are a very small percentage of the population, have outsized influence.

If anyone is curious to understand that, it's the proportional representation system inside Israel that really gives a small number of people and parties that swing vote that allows no... Because we haven't had a majority clearly voted in through the PR system inside Israel, it means often that these minority voices, although united in their parties, can often have outsized influence.

Today, they are very much directing the political winds, if you will. It is very simple in that they have a desire for what is called “Greater Israel” and that includes overtaking Gaza and, importantly, overtaking the West Bank. In fact, overtaking the West Bank is more of a stronger religious conviction than necessarily taking over Gaza.

• (1225)

Taking over Gaza may satisfy what they think is their security interest, but—understandably, I think—those who have been watching Israeli politics for many years know that there's a strong desire to overtake the West Bank. Annexation of the West Bank is absolutely a political imperative of this small community that has outsized influence. In many ways, secular Israelis, who are about 40% of the population, increasingly feel that they are drowned out.

That is the status of where we are today. I'd be happy to take questions.

Thank you, Ali, for that.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for that, Professor Momani.

We now go to Professor Imseis.

Welcome. We're very much looking forward to your testimony. You have five minutes, Professor Imseis.

**Dr. Ardi Imseis:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It has long been Canada's policy to support a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The most practical means that Canada has of bringing this about, especially at this pivotal time, is to immediately recognize the state of Palestine.

Among many reasons for that, there are three to my mind.

First, immediate recognition of Palestine would serve as a holding operation against the clear Israeli rejection of the two-state solution. On July 18, 2024, the Israeli parliament passed a resolution formally rejecting the establishment of a Palestinian state in the occupied Palestinian territory. This position has been held by Israel for years, as stated publicly at the highest governmental levels. The governing Likud party platform openly rejects the establishment of a Palestine state.

Likewise, the so-called guiding principles of the present government of the State of Israel state that “The Jewish people have an exclusive and indisputable right to all [parts] of the Land of Israel”, which is a term that includes the occupied Palestinian territory, and that “The government will promote and develop settlement” in that territory to that end.

In order to apply what it calls its sovereignty in the occupied Palestinian territory, Israel has appointed a special minister, Mr. Bezalel Smotrich, who asserted on May 18, 2023, that the “core mission” of the Israeli government is to increase the number of settlements in the West Bank by 500,000 within two years.

I note that all of this happened before October 7, 2023.

Second, immediate recognition of Palestine would be in keeping with Canada's international legal obligation to see to it that the Palestinian people's long-frustrated right to self-determination is realized.

On July 19 this year, this obligation was affirmed by the International Court of Justice when it determined that Israel's continued presence in the occupied Palestinian territory is unlawful, in part because it violates the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. The ICJ reiterated that “all States”—which, of course, include Canada—must “ensure that any impediment resulting from the illegal presence of Israel in the [OPT] to the exercise of the Palestinian [people's] right to self-determination is brought to an end.” Recognition is an obvious means by which Canada can discharge this international legal obligation it holds.

There is an unfortunate view in the Canadian political realm that the only way for a Palestinian state to emerge is through bilateral negotiations, but this is legally mistaken. Israel's presence in the territory is an internationally wrongful act, and the end of that act cannot be made subject to negotiation under international law. It must be withdrawn—the occupation—forthwith, immediately and unconditionally.

Third, immediate recognition of Palestine would be in keeping with the fact that the state of Palestine already juridically exists under international law. Palestine meets all four criteria of the existence of a state under international law, which have historically been given a very liberal, flexible and permissive interpretation under state practice.

Number one is that Palestine possesses a permanent population of over five million people, 2.3 million of whom in the Gaza Strip are now at threat of being ethnically cleansed.

Number two is that Palestine possesses a defined territory: the occupied Palestinian territory.

Number three is that Palestine possesses governmental functions sufficient for the functioning of a state, as affirmed by the UN General Assembly, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the ad hoc liaison committee, etc.

Number four is that Palestine has established a capacity to conduct foreign relations, as demonstrated by the fact that it has been granted non-member observer-state status by the UN General Assembly and has a total of 149 other states that recognize it, representing the vast majority of people and states on planet Earth. This includes friends and allies of Canada, such as Ireland, Norway, Spain, Sweden and so on.

I close with this: Canada has officially supported a two-state solution in Israel-Palestine since 1949. Since that year, Canada has recognized only one half of that solution: Israel. At a time when Israel is openly and publicly pursuing a policy aimed at obliterating the two-state solution, Canada must do what it can to stop this from happening. Immediately recognizing the state of Palestine is the least that Canada can do, both in accordance with its obligations under international law, as well as in order to save any prospect of peace in line with the two-state policy in the future. Canada must act now before it is too late.

Thank you very much. I'm happy to take questions.

• (1230)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We now go to the members for questions.

As I understand it, Mr. Chong is first.

You have three minutes.

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions are for Professor Momani. Thank you for taking the time to appear in front of us, from the University of Waterloo.

I was really interested in your opening remarks about the demographic reality. It seems to us that the path to a two-state solution—politically, not legally—must be the result of a negotiated two-state solution settlement between Israelis and Palestinians, and that it also must have popular support. I'm very interested in exploring the demographic reality of Palestinians and Israelis today. You mentioned that there are some 9.8 million Israelis: 40% of them are secular, about half a million of them are in the West Bank and approximately two million of them are Israeli Arabs or Palestinians.

What is the level of popular support amongst the 9.8 million Israeli citizens? Can you break that down amongst the different constituent groups of Israeli citizens? Then I'd like to explore the Palestinian side.

**Dr. Bessma Momani:** Let me just say that I think both communities are becoming more extreme—I think that's just the reality of this awful war—so, of the polls or the numbers that we had from before, some of them have just gotten worse. I think that the time to have a two-state solution was a long time ago. Today, Israel is taken over by those extremist elements. In fact, there's a reason that we've seen, for 11 months, protests on the streets against the Netanyahu government for some of the changes that are happening inside the country.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Are there any polls you can point to that our analysts can research, as we go through the study, that indicate levels of support amongst Israeli citizens?

**Dr. Bessma Momani:** The Carnegie institution did something a couple of years ago. Nathan Brown was one of the co-authors of that report on sentiments within the Israeli and Palestinian communities towards either a two-state or a one-state solution.

• (1235)

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Are you aware of any reputable polling of support amongst Palestinians for a two-state solution, whether they are in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip, or amongst the Palestinians who live outside of those two areas?

**Dr. Bessma Momani:** Yes, I believe there was something done very recently that suggested there was still support for a two-state solution, but the numbers are going down, and that's with every passing year. Of course, this past year that has plummeted, probably, to its lowest ever.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Chong.

We now go to Madame Chatel. You have three minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to welcome all of our witnesses and thank them for taking part in this important study.

I don't think there's any dissent in this committee or in the government about the importance of having a Palestinian state and an Israeli state side by side to bring about lasting peace. I think everyone recognizes that.

In fact, today, with the first panel of witnesses, we talked a lot about the negotiation process for the Oslo accords. We also talked about the conditions needed to bring the parties back to the bargaining table in very challenging circumstances where both populations are traumatized, as we've heard. It's very challenging.

Mr. Imseis, how could Canada play its role in bringing the parties back to the negotiating table so that discussions towards a lasting peace and a two-state solution can continue to move forward?

[English]

**Dr. Ardi Imseis:** Thank you very much for the question.

I think the best role Canada can play is adhering to international law. We pride ourselves on having fidelity to the rules-based international legal order. Any solution to any conflict needs to be measured by and consistent with the firm guardrails of what international law requires. As I mentioned, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, the ICJ, determined on July 19 that Israel's very presence in the occupied Palestinian territory is, in and of itself, unlawful and therefore an internationally wrongful act. The law on state responsibility does not require that the end of that act be made subject to negotiation.

The same is true with respect to the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination. If you require the end of the occupation and the Palestinian people's exercising of their right to self-determination to be subject to negotiation between a bad faith, belligerent occupier—that is physically in the territory and unlawfully colonizing it—and a defenceless population subject to its control, you're in effect giving the occupying power a veto, through negotiations, over the exercise of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

Canada should abide by international law and encourage Israel to withdraw—as per the ICJ ruling—from the occupied Palestinian territory. Then two states can discuss other issues in negotiations between themselves.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** Thank you.

I would also like Ms.—

[English]

**The Chair:** We next go to Mr. Bergeron for three minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** I, too, would like to thank the witnesses for being here, and I thank them for enlightening the committee on the important study it is undertaking today.

Mr. Antonius, you talked a lot about how Canada needs to be respectful of international law.

My question is very simple. In your opinion, would recognizing the state of Palestine comply with international law?

**Mr. Rachad Antonius:** Obviously, it would comply. However, that one step would not suffice.

On paper, all the major principles that guide the policy of the Government of Canada reinforce international law and recognize its

importance, but they are not enforced. We have to learn from the mistakes of the past.

At the time of the Oslo accords, there was tremendous support on all sides for the peace process and mutual recognition. Even in Gaza, Hamas's popularity had fallen to zero, or close to it.

The reason it didn't work was that on the day the Oslo accords were signed, September 13, 1993, settlement construction in the occupied territories was ramping up again. In seven years, between 1993 and 2000, Israel moved four times as many settlers into the occupied territories as in the previous 25 years. All of this was done in violation of international law. However, no serious pressure was brought to bear to put an end to it. That's where the problem lies.

• (1240)

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Imseis, yesterday the Knesset banned the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, or UNRWA, from entering Palestinian territory.

First, can you explain the importance of UNRWA in the Palestinian territories?

Second, do you think this decision could speed up the process of making the occupied territories, particularly Gaza, completely uninhabitable, with the goal of ultimately turning it into a buffer zone that could be used for settlement?

[English]

**Dr. Ardi Imseis:** I do agree with that. The Israelis have long had a problem with UNRWA. By passing the legislation they did yesterday and withdrawing the privileges and immunities of the agency to operate in the territory that they occupy, the OPT, it deprives the agency from being able to discharge its obligations.

For instance, one of the provisions of the legislation is that no Israeli can communicate, discuss anything or have contact with any agency official. You can imagine that the hundreds of checkpoints erected, maintained and manned by the Israeli military across the occupied Palestinian territory need to be traversed by UNRWA officials in UN-marked and plated vehicles on a daily basis, or on an hourly basis. It is now illegal for these soldiers to speak to or entertain UNRWA's very presence in that territory.

What this means is that, because UNRWA is the largest provider of humanitarian aid and assistance to Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory, if you remove—as the Israelis are attempting to do—UNRWA's presence in the territory, you make it a whole lot harder for Palestinians to live.

The occupying power has an obligation under international law to provide humanitarian aid, assistance and relief supplies to the protected populations—see article 59 of the fourth Geneva convention—and it has an obligation to do that also under article 60. If UNRWA is not there to do it for the occupying power, that burden falls to the Israelis, and they will not do it. They have made it very clear.



This is, in effect, an attempt to hasten the ethnic cleansing of occupied Palestine, in my respectful view. I say this as a former legal counsel to UNRWA of some 12 years. I've served with UNRWA. I spoke regularly with Israeli officials, including in the IDF. I understand the operations of the organization, and I hold myself out to answer any question in relation to UNRWA.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. McPherson, you have three minutes.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you very much.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here today. This is such an important conversation.

Professor Imseis, I'm going to ask you a series of three questions, if I can get through them.

In late September, Jordan's foreign affairs minister, Ayman Safadi, said at the UN that Arab countries are "willing to guarantee the security of Israel" if Israel ends its occupation and a Palestinian state is established.

Can you comment on the role of Muslim and Arab countries in potentially supporting the security of Israel once the occupation ends and a Palestinian state is recognized?

**Dr. Ardi Imseis:** It's vital. In 2002, after many decades of the Israeli government clamouring for the recognition of its neighbours in the Arab world and in the Muslim world, the Arab peace initiative was launched by the League of Arab States, holding out an offer of full recognition of the State of Israel if Israel were to withdraw, as it is legally required to do, from the whole of the occupied Palestinian territory. That was 22 years ago. That offer is still on the table.

When Foreign Minister Safadi mentioned that just the other day, that was a big thing, because the moment that Israel withdraws, the Arab states and the Muslim states, all of them—these are over 51 states—will recognize Israel.

They'll therefore have bilateral relations with Israel that require that they respect Israel's territorial integrity and political independence in Israel's borders. The key is that Israel is not Palestine. Israel has no sovereign rights or legal rights in occupied Palestine. That's the *quid pro quo*. Respect international law; we recognize you and will protect you.

• (1245)

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Excellent. Thank you.

That goes forward to some of the legal obligations that Canada has. We look at the ICJ decision that came out earlier this year that recognized the occupied territories are against international law.

What are Canada's obligations with regard to that decision?

**Dr. Ardi Imseis:** As I mentioned earlier—or I should have mentioned—the International Court of Justice made it clear that Canada has an obligation, first, not to recognize the legality of Israel's continued presence in the territory or to do anything to either aid or assist it in the maintenance of its illegal presence in the territory.

This requires a complete revolution in the bilateral relations among all states—but in this case, Canada and Israel—to ensure

that none of those relations do anything to help Israel maintain its presence in the occupied Palestinian territory. This covers economic, political and diplomatic relations, social relations, civil relations, the whole lot.

We have, for instance, a free trade agreement with Israel, which is all good. Canada can do that with Israel, but that free trade agreement recognizes that Israel defines Israel as including the occupied Palestinian territory. This is a violation of the ICJ advisory opinion. It is a violation of the peremptory right of Palestinian people to self-determination. The agreement itself, as a matter of international law—see article 53 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties—is illegal, *ab initio*. This needs to be reviewed.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you.

Very quickly, we've heard the government say that they would recognize Palestine when the time is right. When is the right time, Professor?

**Dr. Ardi Imseis:** It's now. The right time was yesterday.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We next go to MP Aboultaif for three minutes.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Thank you.

Dr. Antonius, I have a question. The framework of the Oslo accord was agreed to by 70% of Palestinians. The number before last year, last October, was only 30%. By the same token, only 20% of Israelis aged 18 to 34 support the two-state solution. It seems like the support among both Palestinians and Israelis, whether for the Oslo accord or for the two-state solution, is low.

Can you elaborate on this and what Canada can do to enhance this further in the cloud of what's going on right now, with everybody's stance over the war taking place on the ground?

**Mr. Rachad Antonius:** It is very difficult to get two people who are at war at this moment to talk and recognize each other. This can be done only by well-intentioned people outside of the immediate circle of confrontation in order to keep the dialogue open.

However, again, why did it go down? Why did this big support we had right after Oslo go down? It's because Oslo was used as an excuse to take over more land, with the blessing of Canada. Canada, on paper, said it was illegal but never exercised any serious pressure on Israel.

Therefore, the first thing to do now is to stop the massacres, and then try to put something into effect. Of course, Israel would not withdraw any moment now, but if Israel could say that it plans to withdraw, that would help.

Right now, I believe that none of the solutions that are available is fair, and none of the fair solutions is available now. We're at an impasse because of the war and because of the policy of taking over the land, including the occupied land in contravention of international law and in contravention of Canadian policy.

The road is not easy, but it must be done stepwise. The first thing is to stop the violence now.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** It's not fair to blame, let's say, Canada. I hear some blame from you on this.

Do you believe Palestinians made a mistake in going to Oslo?

**Mr. Rachad Antonius:** I don't think they made a mistake of engaging in talks. They may have made a mistake in some of the provisions of Oslo. They should have negotiated better provisions in Oslo, because in Oslo, the recognition is not symmetrical. The Palestinians do recognize an Israeli state, but Israel recognizes only the right of the Palestinian Authority to speak in the name of some of the Palestinians.

The idea of a Palestinian state is not present in Oslo at all. It's absent. The only legal reference is resolution 242, which does not mention the word "Palestine" once.

• (1250)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We next go to MP Housefather, for three minutes.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to be here with committee members as we talk about how we can reach peace in the Middle East, ideally with a two-state solution, with Israel, the world's only majority Jewish state, living in peace and security with its Palestinian neighbours. Ideally, this would be through negotiations between the two parties, but if not, we need to understand what conditions would be needed to recognize the state of Palestine.

Professor Imseis, I'd like to start with you. I read several of the things you've written, including a document you presented earlier this year at the United Nations entitled "The Nakba and the UN's Permanent Responsibility for the Question of Palestine". I'll read one paragraph. It states:

For that, it is essential to discuss the fateful decision made by the then western dominated UN General Assembly to recommend partition of Palestine against the will of the country's indigenous majority population through resolution 181 of 29 November 1947. A review of the terms of the partition plan and the accompanying UN record...reveals that the plan was illegal under prevailing international law. This illegality helped lay the ground-work for the Nakba of 1948 [which means "catastrophe"] and its painfully unjust results that have continued and, indeed, accelerated ever since.

It sounds to me, and I've read through it, that your thesis is essentially that the creation of Israel was illegal under international law. Therefore, I'm going to ask you, do you recognize the State of Israel? We talk about a two-state solution.

Do you recognize that Israel has a right to exist as a democratic and Jewish state?

**Dr. Ardi Imseis:** Thank you very much for the question, sir. You've skipped a portion of it. The proposition that resolution 181 of November 29, 1947, is illegal does not equate to suggesting that in 2024 Israel does not have a right to exist. Let's be clear. Israel is a fact. It is a state. It has the right to territorial integrity and political independence as a state. It's a state—full stop. That's a fact.

The question that I was looking at in that speech and as a scholar, which I have done in a book I would commend to you called *The United Nations and the Question of Palestine*—see chapter 4—is that actions taken in November 1947 by the UN General Assembly to partition Palestine did not comport with the requirements of international law as international law stood at that date. The principle of inter-temporal law requires that we apply the law as it exists at the time in question that you're looking at. Israel exists today. It is established.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** I'm reclaiming my time, Professor.

Again, I understand that, but your thesis, as I understand it, is that there should have been, at the time, a vote amongst the majority population to determine if they wanted one state and not two states.

**Dr. Ardi Imseis:** That's what we call democracy, sir, yes.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Okay, so today is that your position as well? If you're arguing that, are you saying that you would prefer to have one state as opposed to two states voted on by the majority of the population of the entire territory?

In essence, are you arguing that you would actually prefer to submit one of the two to the majority will?

**Dr. Ardi Imseis:** Are you suggesting that democracy is a good idea, sir?

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** I'm suggesting that what you're suggesting seems to make the State of Israel's existence very tenuous—

**Dr. Ardi Imseis:** Not at all.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** —because your argument is, okay, Israel exists, so—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Housefather. You're 20 seconds over.

Next we go to Mr. Bergeron. You have a minute and a half, sir.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In a sense, Israel was created by UN Resolution 181 of 1947. The resolution called for the partition of Mandatory Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state.

I have a question for Professor Antonius and Professor Imseis, and I'd like a quick answer, please.

How do you explain the Israeli government's current hostility to the UN?

**Mr. Rachad Antonius:** I think the hostility of the Israeli government is mostly towards international law. Its hostility towards the UN is the result of its hostility to international law, because the UN is the guardian of international law.

That's how I see it.

[English]

**Dr. Ardi Imseis:** There's a long answer to that. I'll try to keep it tight. The United Nations is not a monolithic body. It has six principle organs. The United Nations has the Security Council, where Israel has enjoyed a privileged position by virtue of its special relationship with a permanent member there. The Israelis have no problem with the Security Council, save and except for decisions that have been taken by the Security Council that they have violated for many a year.

Second, with respect to the General Assembly, Israel has a real problem there, and it's because the political dynamic of the General Assembly is different. It's top-heavy for the global south, which has historically been very supportive of the Palestinian people by virtue of the historical ravages of colonialism and imperialism and so on, so it has a problem with what the General Assembly says.

It also has a problem with the Secretary-General. They have indicated to him that he's a persona non grata. That would deal with the UN Secretariat. That's another body of the UN. When the International Court of Justice was looking at this last advisory opinion, the Israelis called this a form of legal terrorism, and so on.

The problem has to do exactly with what Professor Antonius said. The United Nations is a standard-bearer of international law, and when the UN bodies pronounce upon Israeli actions in the occupied Palestinian territory and determine those actions to be unlawful, understandably, the Israelis don't like it. This is the basis of their concern with the UN.

• (1255)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now we go to MP McPherson.

You have a minute and a half.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you very much, and thank you for your testimony, Professor, in terms of recognizing that the state of Palestine does already exist. It is simply the recognition of Canada that we were talking about and debating today, which brings me to my question.

We know that allies—Norway, Sweden, Spain, Ireland, etc.—have recognized the state of Palestine. Why do you believe it's taken Canada so long to get there, so long to take that step?

**Dr. Ardi Imseis:** Look, I can only surmise a guess based on my read. I think it's because the Canadians are bound in their foreign policy when it comes to this issue to the Washington consensus. The position of Washington for a long time, because it is so close to the Israelis, is to say that you cannot have the establishment of a Palestinian state and, therefore, the recognition of said state by other countries unless you have a negotiated resolution.

As I have said, this runs completely counter to relevant principles of international law. The Palestinian people are a people juridically. They have a right to self-determination. Their self-determination unit is the occupied Palestinian territory. They have a right to establish a state in that territory to the exclusion of all other peoples. Israel is not sovereign in that territory.

The principal judicial organ of the UN has determined that Israel has an obligation to withdraw from that territory “as rapidly as possible”. The General Assembly on September 18, 2024, with the passage of emergency special session resolution ES-10/24 has indicated that this means that September 17, 2025, is the deadline by which Israel must withdraw from the territory. That's international law.

There's no reason why the Canadians should not recognize...absent these negotiations, which will never happen. The historical record is very clear. Let's take the Israelis seriously for what they say and do.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Next, we go to MP Chong.

You have three minutes.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to talk about the larger geopolitical context of all of this.

Only 8% of the world's population lives in democracies. Forty per cent of the world's population lives in authoritarian states. That's according to the Economist Intelligence Unit. Of the 190 or so member states in the United Nations, only maybe three dozen are full-fledged democracies. The rest, some 150-plus states, are not considered full-fledged democracies. When we look at democracies, the vast majority of democracies believe that the recognition of a Palestinian state should come as a result of a negotiated two-state solution, and not immediately.

I think we need to situate this conflict in the Middle East in a larger context. Canada is a liberal democracy, as I think everybody around the table would agree. Israel is also a liberal democracy. Democracies are flawed. They're not perfect, but Canada and Israel are both liberal democracies.

The conflicts between Israel and Hamas, between Israel and Hezbollah, and between Israel and Iran are not taking place in a vacuum. It is part of a rising clash between a rising authoritarianism and democracies like Israel, Ukraine and Taiwan.

On the other side of that clash are authoritarian states like the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran. In our view, there is no question on which side of the line Canada should stand. We stand with liberal democracies.

I'd just like the witness's commentary on the situation in that larger context.

• (1300)

**Mr. Rachad Antonius:** There have been, in the last year, over 42,000 people killed, about 80% of whom are civilians and 60% of whom are women and children. I'm not sure how you would qualify the political force that does that as a liberal democracy. It's a liberal democracy within its own borders. It's not a liberal democracy in the territories it occupies. By siding with those who committed these massacres, we are not standing for liberal democracies.

I would like to quote Omer Bartov, a Jewish Israeli citizen who served in the Israeli army and is a professor of history specializing in genocides. He wrote a column in *The Guardian*, on August 13, where he says that he now believes that what is going on is genocide. This is an Israeli Jewish citizen who served in the Israeli army. We have to take that into account when taking a stand on this issue.

**The Chair:** I apologize, but we are out of time.

For the last question, we go to MP Zuberi.

You have three minutes.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** Thank you to witness for being here for this critical study about how we, as a country, can implement our policy to recognize the two-state solution and actualize it.

My first question will be for Professor Imseis.

What criteria, in your view, would allow Canada to get to the point where we can recognize the state of Palestine and actualize a two-state solution?

**Dr. Ardi Imseis:** Thank you.

It's international law. That's very clear. That's the criterion.

It certainly isn't democracy, because that's subjective among different states. All states agree that the governing principle of how they should relate to one another is international law. International law already determined that Palestine juridically exists. As I said, the 1933 Montevideo convention criteria are met, as recognized by 149 states.

Canada just needs to exercise its political will to recognize that fact.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** Some say the recognition on Canada's end would be symbolic, but others argue it would actually help save lives.

Can you opine about that? How would this help save lives?

**Dr. Ardi Imseis:** It wouldn't be symbolic. When one state recognizes another, a corollary of that is this: They recognize their right to political independence and territorial integrity.

That would require a change in the policy Canada has vis-à-vis the occupying power. Israel's physical presence in every inch of occupied Palestine is unlawful. When Canada recognizes the state of Palestine, the position of Canada must necessarily be that Israel must withdraw from the occupied state of Palestine, as per international law—the sole criterion all states agree they should abide by.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** We have one minute left.

With respect to Canada, we are a G7 country, and many of our EU allies and partners have recently recognized the state of Palestine.

As a G7 country, if and when we do recognize the state of Palestine, how would that impact the world stage and other actors?

**Dr. Ardi Imseis:** Certainly, Canadians are among the last to recognize it. Ideally, you would have a snowball effect, much like you do with most any recognition of most any country.

However, it would certainly help peace in the Middle East. If you claim to have a two-state solution as a policy, and that is the global consensus around which Middle East peace is envisioned, recognition of one-half of that two-state framework makes no sense. This does not mean other matters don't need to be dealt with between the two parties. It just means the parties should be on an equal footing, at least juridically, at the negotiating table—if indeed that's what it comes down to, in the end.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

That concludes the scheduled questions. However, I want to point out to the members that MP Morrice has been patiently here for two hours.

Is it the will of committee members to allow him three minutes to ask a question?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, everyone.

MP Morrice, please proceed.

You have three minutes.

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, colleagues.

It's baffling to me that Canada states it wants a lasting peace and supports a two-state solution, but it won't even recognize one of the two states.

Professor Imseis, I want to read you a quote by our Minister of Foreign Affairs. I'd love to hear what your response would be to her when she says, "We are working with our like-minded countries to make sure that we identify what are the conditions for (the) right time".

What is your response to that?

● (1305)

**Dr. Ardi Imseis:** The conditions are set out in international law, specifically the 1933 Montevideo convention relating to the rights of states. Palestine has a population. It has a fixed territory. It has a government that is capable. It also has the ability to conduct foreign relations.

Those facts satisfy statehood in international law. Palestine is recognized by 149 other states. Get on with it.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** Thank you for that. You've been very clear.

We also have Canada's foreign policy dictated as the following, with respect to Palestinian statehood: "Canada is prepared to recognize the State of Palestine at the time most conducive to lasting peace". This is, again, wording that doesn't seem to make much sense to me.

What is your sense? What is "the time most conducive to lasting peace"?

**Dr. Ardi Imseis:** It is yesterday.

We know from the facts before us, as established in the United Nations record—including the ICJ's record—that the occupying power is acting in bad faith and illegally. It said openly, and its legislature said very clearly, that there will be no Palestinian state.

If you're waiting for them to change their minds, it's not going to happen. That's why third states need to recognize the state of Palestine, as a holding operation in order to make sure the occupying power ceases and desists. It's a preservation move.

**Mr. Mike Morrice:** Thank you, Professor.

I will get in one last question.

You also said at this committee that recognizing Palestinian statehood is “the least that Canada can do”, and you've spoken quite a bit about what's necessary with respect to the occupied Palestinian territories.

Can you share more? We're talking about Palestinian statehood and a lasting peace. What are the implications if we want a lasting peace, as it relates to the occupied Palestinian territories?

**Dr. Ardi Imseis:** The implications are that Canada needs to treat these parties fairly, equally and equitably, as per international law. Israel has rights, including the right to territorial integrity and political independence, but Israel is not Palestine. Israel in Palestine is not Israel, and Canada needs to be very clear about that.

The recognition of the state of Palestine has no implication on Israel at all because Palestine is Palestine. If you recognize the United States, does that have an implication on Taiwan? No, because Taiwan is not the United States. It's self-evident. This stuff is so clear, and international law backs it.

**The Chair:** Excellent. That concludes our questions.

Professor Antonius, Professor Imseis and Professor Momani, we're very grateful for your testimony. Thank you for graciously taking all the questions that were thrown at you by the members. We're very grateful.

The meeting is adjourned.

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