# Talks on recognising Palestine begin as UK suspends Israel trade negotiations amid arms export scrutiny



Talks at an official level concerning the potential recognition of the state of Palestine are set to commence, coinciding with a UN-sponsored conference in New York that begins on 17 June. This development marks a significant juncture in ongoing diplomatic discussions, particularly given the backdrop of heightened tensions and humanitarian crises in the region.

A senior Arab diplomat based in London recently expressed a shift in sentiment regarding Western recognition of Palestine, stating, “If you asked me a fortnight ago if there will be wider recognition by western states, I would have said ‘no’, but now I am not so sure.” This shift underscores the evolving dynamics of international opinion and political action regarding Palestine, particularly in light of recent events.

The impetus for these discussions was notably influenced by UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy's decision earlier this week to suspend trade negotiations with Israel. Lammy condemned Israel's ongoing blockade of aid to Gaza, calling the situation "abominable." His conversations with Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar touched upon the critical issues impeding humanitarian assistance, reflecting a broader concern for the welfare of Palestinians amidst escalating violence.

The upcoming New York conference, co-hosted by Saudi Arabia and France, represents a concerted international effort to address the issues facing Gaza. French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot articulated the necessity for action, declaring, “We cannot leave the children of Gaza a legacy of violence and hatred.” He emphasised the urgency of recognising Palestinian statehood as part of a collective drive towards peace.

However, the discussions leading to potential recognition of Palestine are fraught with complexities. One critical question is whether such recognition must be accompanied by a parallel affirmation of Israel's sovereignty from nations like Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. This challenge is compounded by statements from the new US ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, who has publicly questioned the need for a Palestinian state, demonstrating the stark contrast in viewpoints among key international players.

Beyond political gestures, the recognition of Palestine may have tangible implications for international trade and humanitarian intervention in the occupied territories. Although UK ministers currently do not foresee immediate additional measures, the prospect of employing air drops for aid remains on the table, as evidenced by last year's attempts in Jordan.

Amidst these developments, the UK government faces scrutiny regarding its arms exports to Israel. Recent statistics have revealed that, following Labour's partial arms export ban, the UK has approved military equipment licences totalling £127.6 million for Israel, surpassing the combined figure for 2020-2023. This has raised alarm among MPs, leading Liam Byrne, chair of the business select committee, to summon ministers responsible for arms exports to provide explanations for potential loopholes in compliance with export policies designed to prevent the flow of military resources to conflict zones.

In response to concerns about the government’s arms policies, Lammy has publicly rejected accusations of negligence, asserting, “arms are not getting to Israel that could be used in Gaza.” Nonetheless, the available data indicates notable authorisations of military goods, including components for targeted systems and munitions, heightening apprehension regarding the ethical implications of these sales.

Furthermore, the high court recently undertook a judicial review concerning the legality of the UK’s decision to sell components for F-35 fighter jets to Israel, amid the acknowledgment that these parts could potentially be used in military operations that endanger civilians in Gaza. This scrutiny reflects broader questions about the UK’s role and responsibilities in international arms trade and conflict resolution.

As discussions surrounding the recognition of Palestine unfold, they come at a time of urgent humanitarian needs and potential shifts in geopolitical alliances. The outcomes of these talks may not only reshape relations between Western nations and Palestine but also will impact the broader landscape of Middle Eastern diplomacy as stakeholders grapple with the intertwined legacies of conflict and the quest for peace.

### Reference Map

1. Core focus on recognition talks about Palestine.
2. Shifts in sentiment on Western recognition of Palestine.
3. Context of UK's trade talks with Israel and Lammy's statements.
4. New York conference details and international responses.
5. Implications for trade and humanitarian action.
6. Scrutiny over arms exports and government responses.
7. Judicial review of UK's arms sales legality.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/may/21/talks-to-start-on-british-recognition-of-state-of-palestine> - Please view link - unable to able to access data