

# Abbas gives Israel one year to end occupation of West Bank

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has given Israel one year to end the occupation of the West Bank, saying that he could take it to the ICJ if it fails to withdraw from occupied Palestinian territory.



Abbas addressed the UN General Assembly via video-link from Ramallah [Getty]

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Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on Friday said that Israel “had one year ahead to end the occupation” of the West Bank.

Abbas made this statement in a speech addressing the UN General Assembly, adding that if the occupation doesn’t end, “we will head to the International Court of Justice, to have a decision on the legitimacy of the occupation on the borders of 1967”.

Speaking via video-link from Ramallah, Abbas hinted that he could withdraw recognition of Israel.

“If the occupation continues, what does our recognition of Israel within its 1967

borders mean?" he said.

Abbas also strongly condemned the Israeli government's stated policy of not negotiating with his Palestinian Authority, which has limited self-rule in the West Bank. Last week, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennet said that he won't meet the Palestinian president.

Abbas accused Israel of "evading a political solution", warning that "undermining the two-state solution will open the doors for alternatives that will be imposed by facts on the ground, including the return to the Resolution 181 partition plan of 1947".

He added that Israel's practices of "ethnic cleansing and annexation" will "consecrate the reality of a single racist state", saying that the international community "has failed to hold Israel accountable, allowing it to "behave as a state above the law".

Israel has constructed hundreds of illegal settlements in the West Bank, where approximately 600,000 Israelis live.

### **Dialogue with the US**

The Palestinian president criticized "the states who give money and weapons to Israel, who uses them to kill Palestinians". His remarks came one day after the US Congress approved \$1 billion in funding for Israel's Iron Dome system.

However, Abbas also referred to "our constructive dialogue with the American administration to restore US-Palestinian relations". On Tuesday, US President Joe Biden told the UN General Assembly that he supports the creation of a Palestinian state, saying that it is "the best way" to ensure Israel's future. Biden, however, added that "we are still a long way from that goal at this moment".

In addition, Abbas called on UN General Secretary Antonio Guterres to organize an international peace conference "under the auspices of the international quartet only", as well as to "activate the UN resolutions concerning international protection for the Palestinian people".

Abbas referred to the UNGA emergency meeting resolution of June 2018 that requested the UN Secretary General to present "recommendations for an international protection mechanism for Palestinians".

The international quartet on the Middle East is made up of four countries and organizations involved in mediating the Israeli-Palestinian peace process - the United States, the European Union, the UN, and Russia.

### **Elections and reconciliation with Hamas**

Concerning internal Palestinian politics, Abbas said that municipal elections will be organized in the Palestinian territories “in the coming months”.

He also referred to the presidential and legislative elections, which were planned for last May before Abbas called them off in April. He insisted that “we did not cancel the elections, but we postponed them until we have a guarantee that we can hold them in Jerusalem”.

Palestinians last went to the polls in 2006, when Hamas won Palestinian legislative elections. Abbas’s official term as Palestinian president ended in 2009, but no presidential elections have been held since then.

In 2007, Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip following a deadly conflict with Abbas’s Fatah movement. Abbas said that he was “working to form a national unity government” with Hamas which would “help to begin the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip”.

The besieged Gaza Strip is still suffering the effects of 14 years of crippling Israeli blockade and four wars which have happened since 2008.

The 85- year-old Palestinian president said during his speech that “I’ve struggled all my life for peace, and I have followed the legal and peaceful ways, but I have found no partner for peace in Israel.

“We thank the international community for helping the Palestinian people build their institutions and economy, but the time has come to take steps that could put an end to occupation,” he added.

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