



Is Europe TURNING AGAINST Israel?

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Aaron Maté (AM): There are reports that countries including the UK and France are preparing to recognize Palestinian statehood, but the US, by contrast, is openly against that, as they have been for many decades. I want to get your reaction to some remarks from the US representative at the UN. His name is John Kelley, and this is what he said about the calls for Palestinian statehood – that essentially to grant Palestinians a state now would be to reward the attacks of October 7th.

John Kelley: The United States stands with Israel in unequivocally rejecting any effort to unilaterally recognize a Palestinian state or impose conditions on Israel, which would be an unconscionable reward for the heinous Hamas attack on Israel that massacred and brutally kidnapped Israelis and Americans. Thank you, Mr. President.

AM: So there you go. According to the US, it would be an unconscionable reward to Palestinians to give them a state because October 7th happened.

Mouin Rabbani (MR): Well, I think what he's really trying to say is, once again, expressing the traditional US position, which is that the Palestinian people have no legitimate rights, they have no legitimate grievances, and they certainly have no right to an existence independent of Israel in the form of a state on what the United States de facto considers Israeli rather than Palestinian territory. I believe it's that simple.

AM: Do you see any countervailing force right now in the region or anywhere around the world, whether it's Europe, you know, becoming increasingly critical of Israel, talking about recognizing Palestinian statehood, or the Gulf states? Trump just did a tour of several Gulf countries, talked about making some lavish deals, talked about receiving a gift from Qatar, a very fancy jet – but even there, at least publicly, the issue of Gaza did not come up very much. Do you see any pressure going on behind the scenes on the US to stop the genocide from some of its allies, whether they're in Europe or the Gulf?

MR: Well, let's take those one by one. In the Gulf, as you will have noticed, the regional priority of the states that Trump visited were not Gaza but were a lifting of the sanctions on Syria because the Gulf states are very concerned about having another Iraq on their doorstep, referring to the chaos that engulfed Iraq after the 2003 US invasion. And second of all, encouraging Trump to continue diplomacy with Iran because they recognize that in the event of a direct military confrontation, they will be in the front line and will be paying the highest price of any such conflict. And Gaza was, I think, much less of a priority. It barely registered in these discussions, except perhaps, you know, as a kind of minor issue. When we did see the Arab states and not only the Gulf states collectively and loudly and very publicly come out in opposition to the United States was in February when Trump proclaimed his harebrained initiative about expelling all the Palestinians to make way for what he called the Gaza Riviera, because that was a fundamental difference. Since October 2023, well, for much longer, but particularly since then, Israel has been slaughtering Palestinians in their own homeland. What changed with Trump's proposal was that these Palestinians would be collectively expelled to the Arab world. That, in contrast to the genocide in Gaza, is experienced as a direct threat to their national security, a direct threat of their domestic stability and a direct threat to what remains of their domestic legitimacy. And it's for that reason that they stood up and said no. And that's why I don't think this proposal is ever going to get off the ground, certainly not in the form that it was initially proposed.

Europe is different. What we've seen from Europe is a clear and a significant change in tone, but we have seen absolutely no difference in conduct. In other words, it's business as usual with a scolding. And of course there are exceptions – Spain, Ireland, Norway. But if you look at the European Union, I think it's important to recognize, for example, that in 2000 the European Union signed what's known as an association agreement with Israel, an agreement that gives Israel preferential trade privileges in Europe. It allows Israeli institutions to participate in various European Union research and development programs as if it were an EU member. And Article 2 of that association agreement makes Israeli compliance with its human rights obligations an essential condition of Israeli participation or Israeli access to this agreement. That was 25 years ago. And until today the EU has never invoked Article 2. In other words, the EU has never determined that Israel is not fulfilling its human rights obligations. And last week, it's true, the EU announced that it would launch a review to determine whether or not Israel was in compliance with its obligations, meaning that almost two years into a genocide no one in Brussels knows what's going on. And they have to launch a review, which is another way of saying we're going to take our time, do an investigation, take even more time to write a report, take even more time to hold discussions about the conclusions of this report, then we won't have a majority and we'll just continue with business as usual. And even more importantly, as pointed out, for example, by Hugh Lovatt of the European Council on Foreign Relations, a review was already conducted last year, but it wasn't publicly announced. It was conducted in secret and it was apparently a very damning report that was never released and never acted upon. So even when we get to issues like France and potentially others declaring that they are considering or even intend to recognize Palestinian statehood, well, all well and good. But if it's not paired with concrete action to make such a state possible to reverse the Israeli occupation of these territories – when you

look the other way, when Israel announces 22 new settlements, you know. The occupation started in 1967, in 2025, statements that are not accompanied by decisive action are not only meaningless, they're worse than meaningless, because what they really do is they serve as camouflage for doing nothing.

AM: We'll leave it there. Mouin Rabbani, thanks so much for joining us on System Update.

MR: Thanks very much for having me.

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