

Spain Cancels Israeli Arms Deal; Luxembourg to Recognize Palestine

LUXEMBOURG/BRUSSELS (Dispatches) – Luxembourg is preparing to formally recognize the State of Palestine, joining a growing number of European countries breaking with long-standing diplomatic caution in response to Israel’s ongoing war on Gaza, which has killed more than 64,900 Palestinians since October 2023.

Prime Minister Luc Frieden and Foreign Minister Xavier Bettel informed parliament that the move will be made in coordination with France, Belgium, and other European nations. The formal recognition is expected to be announced during the United Nations General Assembly session later this month in New York.

France has already confirmed its decision. President Emmanuel Macron said, “True to its historic commitment to a just and lasting peace in the region, I have decided that France will recognize the State of Palestine.” He called for an immediate end to the war and



Pro-Palestinians protestors hold a banner reading ‘(Israel’s prime minister Netanyahu) wanted’ during the 21st and last stage of the Vuelta a Espana 2025, in Madrid on Sept. 14, 2025.

emphasized the need to ensure humanitarian aid reaches civilians.

Belgium and the United Kingdom are also expected to announce recognition by the end of September, marking a significant policy shift amid growing international condemnation of Israel’s actions in Gaza.

The recognition efforts follow mounting criticism from EU lead-

ers over Israel’s brutal war, widely described by rights groups as a campaign of collective punishment and war crimes. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced plans to impose sanctions on extremist Israeli ministers and violent settlers, and to suspend parts of the EU-Israel Association Agreement over human rights violations.

Diplomats say the recent Israeli approval of the controversial E1 settlement plan — which would divide the occupied West Bank — further undermines the viability of a two-state solution and has triggered outrage across European capitals.

In Spain, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has taken one of the continent’s most assertive stances. Madrid has cancelled nearly €1 billion in arms contracts with Israeli firms and banned military cooperation. Sanchez has called for Israel to be barred from international sporting events and announced an entry ban on Israeli officials linked to alleged war crimes in Gaza.

As of April, 147 countries — representing about 75% of UN member states — had recognized Palestine. European momentum is now building in support of Palestinian statehood, amid what many leaders describe as Israel’s deepening international isolation over its Gaza offensive.

Israel Targets Civilians in Lebanon Amid Pressure on Hezbollah

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – Israeli airstrikes on southern Lebanon killed one person and injured at least a dozen others, underscoring the Zionist regime’s ongoing violations of the fragile ceasefire, officials said.

Lebanon’s National News Agency (NNA) reported that Israeli drones fired two missiles at a car near the western entrance of Yater town in Nabatiyeh Governorate, killing one individual.

Later in the day, the Lebanese Health Ministry said an Israeli airstrike struck a building in the Ksar Zaatar neighborhood of Nabatiyeh city, injuring 12 civilians, including four children and seven women. Two of the wounded were reported to be in critical

condition.

The Israeli military claimed it targeted a Hezbollah command post in southern Lebanon. However, the strikes came amid heightened tensions and ongoing Israeli breaches of Lebanese sovereignty, despite a ceasefire that came into effect on November 27, 2024, following nearly 14 months of war.

The ceasefire, brokered after significant casualties and stalemates, was intended to halt hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, the Lebanese resistance group and key military actor in the south. Yet, Israel has repeatedly violated the agreement through airstrikes and incursions into Lebanese airspace, further destabilizing the

region.

Lebanon formally extended the ceasefire until February 18, but Israeli forces continue to occupy strategic positions inside southern Lebanon, including Labbounneh, Mount Blat, Owayda Hill, Aaziyyeh, and Hammamis Hill, all near the border.

Despite near-daily Israeli aggression, Hezbollah remains the only credible force capable of defending Lebanese sovereignty and countering Israeli incursions. The group’s military capacity has prevented further Israeli advances and helped maintain a precarious balance in the region.

Pressure from the United States and Israel on the Lebanese government to disarm Hezbollah has

intensified, but many Lebanese citizens and political figures argue such demands ignore the root cause of instability — Israel’s ongoing violations of Lebanon’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As Israel escalates its military preparations, including constructing a mock Lebanese village in the occupied Golan Heights to train for potential future wars with Hezbollah, the Lebanese government faces growing challenges in balancing diplomatic pressures with the urgent need to protect its people.

The latest airstrikes serve as a stark reminder of the fragile peace and the critical role Hezbollah plays in resisting further Israeli aggression in Lebanon.

Taliban Suspend Fiber-Optic Internet, Citing ‘Immorality’ Concerns

KABUL (Dispatches) -- The Taliban have suspended fiber-optic internet services in Afghanistan’s Balkh province, citing the need to prevent “immoral activities.”

The move, which began in Mazar-i-Sharif, was confirmed by Balkh governor spokesperson Attaullah Zaid. He said the decision followed a direct order from Taliban supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada.

Local telecom providers, including Afghan Telecom, said they were ordered to cut Wi-Fi access across the city. The shutdown has

affected households, businesses, and key government offices, including passport services, customs, and banks.

Students and teachers, especially girls relying on online education due to school bans, report severe disruptions. Mobile data remains the only option, but it is slow, expensive, and unreliable.

Sources inside the telecom sector say the Taliban began suspending fiber-optic services nationwide about 20 days ago. Companies reached out to the Ministry of Communications for clarification

but were told the directive had come directly from Kandahar, where Akhundzada resides.

A delegation of Taliban officials is reportedly set to travel there to stress the importance of high-speed internet for key infrastructure projects like the TAPI pipeline.

Officials say the restrictions are part of a broader effort to curb apps like TikTok and PUBG, as well as access to adult content. However, telecom companies previously warned that filtering tools were costly and largely inef-

fective. Frustrated by providers’ inability to enforce these restrictions, Akhundzada appears to have opted for a complete shutdown.

Average internet speeds have dropped from 40 Mbps to just 4–6 Mbps on mobile networks. Analysts warn that this policy could further isolate Afghans, damaging education, business, and access to information. Although currently limited to Balkh, activists fear the shutdown may be implemented across other provinces, marking a new chapter in Taliban internet control.

Report: U.S. PR Firm Runs \$600,000 Pro-Israel Bot Campaign

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- A U.S.-based public relations firm with deep ties to the Democratic Party is running a large-scale pro-Israel propaganda campaign across major social media platforms, using bots and influencer outreach to push Tel Aviv’s messaging, according to a new report by investigative outlet Sludge.

The Washington-based firm SKDKnickerböcker LLC, or SKDK, reportedly signed a \$600,000 contract with the Israeli regime five months ago. The contract was disclosed through a filing under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), revealing that SKDK is subcontracting through the French PR firm Havas, under the umbrella of U.S.

parent company Stagwell Global.

The campaign targets platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn with what Sludge describes as a “bot-based program” designed to “flood the zone” with Israeli foreign ministry-approved content.

Automated tools are used to amplify posts, while human influencers are also coached to deliver pro-Israel messaging. Outreach efforts extend to major media outlets, including CNN, BBC, Fox News, and the Associated Press.

The campaign mirrors previous influence operations run on behalf of Tel Aviv. Earlier this month, The Grayzone reported on an Israeli intelligence scheme aimed at recruit-

ing Iranians, which used U.S. comedian Desi Banks and the exiled son of Iran’s former monarch as part of its campaign.

A May 2024 Al Jazeera investigation revealed AI-powered “superbots” responding to pro-Palestinian accounts with scripted Israeli talking points, using large language models to simulate human interaction.

SKDK, now officially registered as a foreign agent for Israel, counts Tel Aviv as its only foreign government client. Its parent company, Stagwell, was founded by Mark Penn, a longtime ally of Israel’s Likud party. Stagwell also owns Targeted Victory, a Republican-aligned firm performing similar pro-Israel media outreach.

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Salman that if Islamic countries were “united,” the Israeli regime would “not dare to attack or invade any Muslim country.” He emphasized Saudi Arabia’s potential “important role in the path of unity of Islamic countries.”

Bin Salman expressed optimism about expanding relations between major Islamic countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. He stressed that Islamic nations must become “more empowered in the long term” to “defend their independence and dignity” and to prevent the “aggression and excesses of the Zionist regime.”

“Our region is in a special situation,” bin Salman said. “Strengthening cooperation and unity between us, you, and other Islamic countries is not a choice, but a definite necessity.”

In meetings with other leaders, Pezeshkian reiterated the need for Muslim unity to confront Israeli actions. Speaking with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, he said strengthening “unity and cohesion among Islamic countries” was the most effective way to halt Israel’s repeated crimes.

El-Sisi underscored the importance of Islamic countries adopting a “unified, practical stance” against escalating Israeli violence, noting improving ties between Egypt and Iran offered “good capacities to secure mutual interests as well as the interests of other nations in the region.”

During talks with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Pezeshkian stressed that confronting “the savage crimes” of Israel required Islamic countries to adopt “a unified stance” and take “practical action.” Sharif called for a “coherent and unified stance” and urged consolidated action to prevent further Israeli aggression.

Meeting Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, Pezeshkian said Israel showed it “is bound by no limits or boundaries” in its actions and expressed regret that countries professing to defend human rights had remained silent or provided “military and legal support” to Israel.

Ahead of the summit, Pezeshkian urged Muslims to boycott Israel and stressed the need for greater unity to counter the regime’s aggression.

In a separate meeting with Tajikistan’s President Emomali Rahmon, Pezeshkian condemned Israel, backed by the United States and European countries, for disregarding all limits in its crimes. He said only the “unity and cohesion of Islamic countries” could stop “the killing machine and crimes of this barbaric regime.”

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of the existing opportunities and challenges,” the Iranian foreign minister said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Araghchi pointed to the “unprecedented and blatant violations” of human values, international law, and the UN Charter by the Israeli regime, with the support of certain global powers.

He warned that such unilateral approaches have undermined the post-World War II international order, destabilized global peace and security, and constrained opportunities for cooperation among nations.

“These circumstances underscore the urgent need to strengthen existing multilateral mechanisms and establish new frameworks for collective action,” Araghchi said.

He stressed that cooperation and synergy among developing countries in multilateral settings is no longer a choice, but a necessity.

Underscoring Iran’s own experience as a victim of “U.S. unilateralism and Israeli adventurism,” Araghchi reaffirmed Tehran’s commitment to remaining an active, serious, and constructive player in regional and multilateral economic initiatives.

The ECO promotes regional trade and economic development. Its region is endowed with appropriate capacities, opportunities, and platforms for cooperation in various fields, especially in energy, trade, and transport.

Iran, one of the founders of the organization, is a key member of the group due to its geopolitical and geoeconomic position.

With its impressive energy resources and the geographic location to transfer them to global markets, Iran is an important fulcrum for multilateral cooperation and regional convergence. Besides, it is best placed for transferring energy from Central Asia and the Eurasian region to the world market.

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prohibition against attacking nuclear facilities is a fundamental principle of international law. This principle is enshrined in key documents, including the UN Charter, the IAEA Statute, and the NPT. Therefore, even if the resolution is not adopted, it still holds considerable importance, he added.

In a message posted on his X account on Tuesday, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqhaei highlighted Iran’s initiative, which is supported by China, Nicaragua, Russia, Venezuela, and Belarus, to safeguard the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

He pointed out that the draft resolution emphasizes that all nations possess an “inalienable right to utilize nuclear energy for peaceful purposes” and are entitled to “effective guarantees against any attack or threat of attack.”

The 69th IAEA General Conference, which began on Monday in Vienna and will run until Friday, is a major annual event where member states discuss various issues related to the Agency’s activities and budget.

The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), Muhammad Eslami, is leading the Iranian delegation at the conference, which has submitted Tehran’s draft resolution on the inadmissibility of attacks against nuclear facilities.