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# Europe's Role in Achieving sustainable Peace in Palestine and Kurdistan

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## Authors

Ziryan Rojhelati

**Summary :** Europe's efforts to support the Palestinian cause are commendable. However, in reality, peace, justice, and stability in the Middle East will remain elusive without addressing the Kurdish issue. David Fromkin begins his book *A Peace to End All Peace* with a quote from a British officer, stating that after a war that ended all wars, they made a peace that destroyed all peace. More than a century has passed since that unresolved reconciliation, yet the problems persist. Therefore, what is needed this time is a genuine reconciliation, one that truly resolves the underlying issues.

Three European countries have pledged to recognize the independence of the Palestinian state on May 28, bringing the total number of European nations recognizing Palestine to ten. While many other countries have already recognized Palestine, the European stance is particularly significant due to the historical role of European colonial intervention in the ethnic conflicts that persist in the Middle East, including in Palestine and Kurdistan. The events of October 7 have underscored the urgency of addressing Palestinian statehood, revealing that policies aimed at dividing the Palestinian movement or relying solely on military strength to protect Israel are unsustainable in the long term. The concept of "the strength of the weak" has emerged, indicating a global shift in perspective. Many world powers are now emphasizing a two-state solution, but a crucial question remains: What impact will these changes in European policy towards Palestinian statehood have on the Kurdish issue?

Over the past seven decades, the Palestinian issue has consistently been more prominent on the global agenda than the Kurdish issue, despite the latter having greater numerical and influential significance. My research on military conflict data (UCDP) from 1946 to 2022 reveals that there were 66 conflicts in Palestinian territories, equivalent to 66 years of warfare. In contrast, the Kurdish issue in the Middle East saw 100 years of significant military conflicts due to the division of Kurdistan into multiple regions. In terms of violence and casualties, the Kurdish issue has been the bloodiest ethnic conflict in the Middle East. According to War Correlation Project, a military conflict resulting in over 1,000 casualties per year is classified as a war, while those causing 25-999 casualties per year are considered minor conflicts. The report indicates that only two of the 66 Palestinian conflicts were classified as wars, whereas 22 Kurdish conflicts met this threshold, highlighting the severe impact and high number of Kurdish casualties.

According to [Conflict External Support Dataset](#), between 1975 and 2017, 10 Palestinian organizations received 178 instances of foreign aid across 203 conflicts, whereas Kurdish organizations received 95 instances of foreign aid across 188 conflicts. However, aid to Kurdish parties was more focused on allowing the use of land, while Palestinian movements received higher levels of direct aid, arms, and training.

Since 1988, 139 countries have recognized Palestinian independence, and in 2012, Palestine was admitted as an observer to the United Nations. The UN Human Rights Council has passed 95 resolutions since 2006, the UN Security Council has passed 296 resolutions, and the General Assembly [has passed 899](#) resolutions concerning Palestine. This demonstrates the significant global attention the Palestinian issue has received over the past seven decades. In contrast, the most notable resolution on the Kurdish issue was UN Security Council [Resolution 688](#). Despite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international law affirming Palestine's right to statehood—a right recognized by many—when it comes to the Kurdish issue, the level of international recognition and support is markedly different.

The Palestinian issue has sometimes impacted the Kurdish issue in various ways. Notably, in the 1960s, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser welcomed Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani and urged Iraq to grant the Kurds autonomy. During this period, Arab nations were primarily concerned with their conflict with Israel, leading some to believe that the Kurdish issue should not distract from their main focus. The potential connection between UN General Assembly [Resolution 3236](#), which affirmed Palestinian independence in 1974, and the failure of the Kurdish revolution in 1975 remains unclear. However, it is notable that shortly after Palestinian independence was declared in late 1974, the Kurdish revolution collapsed four months later when the United States and Iran withdrew their support. Since then, neither Palestinian statehood nor the Kurdish revolution has achieved its goals.

Since October 7, the Palestinian issue has once again surged to the forefront of the global agenda, overshadowing the Kurdish cause, which had been hailed as a hero in the fight against terrorism until just a few years ago. Naturally, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state would inevitably bring greater attention to the Kurdish struggle in the Middle East. However, while Israel vehemently opposes this, numerous other countries in the region are reluctant to see the Palestinian issue resolved, fearing the potential repercussions it may have on the Kurdish question. The experiences gleaned from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict offer several valuable lessons that can be applied to the Kurdish predicament:

Firstly, a military solution is not viable. Over the past 76 years, Palestinians have engaged in a 66-year struggle without successfully establishing a state. Similarly, Israel has been unable to achieve a decisive victory and completely deny Palestinians their rights. This reality also applies to the Kurdish issue. Throughout Kurdish movements, there have been 100 years of warfare and conflict, with significant political gains achieved only in the 1970s through armed struggle. The remainder has been influenced by various political and geopolitical motives. It's worth noting that no state has succeeded in eradicating the Kurds, whether in the early 1920s when the Kurdish population in the Middle East numbered around 4 million, or today, with estimates ranging from 30 to 45 million.

Secondly, strength and coercion alone are insufficient for securing any state. Israel seeks to assert its power with the backing of the world's largest state and advanced weaponry. While this may yield short-term gains, long-term success is challenging to achieve. Even if Israel were to dismantle Hamas, it could inadvertently pave the way for the emergence of more radical organizations in the future. Similarly, this dynamic applies to the Kurdish issue, given the current internal situation of the Kurds, regional states can suppress the Kurdish issue through economic and military pressure, as well as bilateral and multilateral political and military agreements, as they are doing now. They can even achieve many of their goals because, similar to 1920, 1975, 1990, and 2017, the West has turned its back on the Kurds, or at least is not as supportive as it once was. However, there is no doubt that this significant identity issue in the Middle East, if suppressed now, could resurface in the years to come. In the late 1930s, Iraq and Turkey suppressed Kurdish movements, and after World War II, Iran did the same. However, since the 1960s in Iraq, the late 1970s in Turkey, and the 1980s in Iran, the Kurdish issue has intensified. It has resurfaced with greater intensity than ever before and continues to this day.

Thirdly, Israel's strategy of dividing the Palestinian political and military movements between Fatah and Hamas has proven unsuccessful, mirroring the ineffective approach of dividing the Kurdish factions, particularly between the PUK and KDP. Resolving the Palestinian issue, despite Israel's objections, can ultimately foster greater peace and stability, just as efforts to address the Kurdish dilemma can yield similar outcomes. If regional states prioritize stability and peace, reaching an agreement with the Kurds becomes imperative. A federal Iraq, as outlined in the constitution, could serve as a positive model if implemented effectively.

The Spanish prime minister, set to recognize Palestinian independence alongside Ireland and Norway on Tuesday, stated that the decision was made in the pursuit of peace, justice, and stability. It remains uncertain whether this action will eventually lead to collective European efforts towards Palestinian independence. The main EU powers, Germany and France, continue to advocate for a two-state solution through dialogue, indirectly indicating a requirement for Israel's consent. However, French President Emmanuel Macron has remarked that discussing the recognition of a Palestinian state without dialogue is no longer [taboo](#). This shift represents a positive step forward, particularly given the historical responsibility of France and Britain for the Palestinian and Kurdish issues. These responsibilities have resulted in numerous humanitarian disasters and warrant official apologies. Present-day Europe, often viewed as a champion of democracy and human rights, has a vested interest in preventing terrorism, refugee crises, and instability, as well as in resolving the Kurdish and Palestinian issues. As the inheritor of British-French colonial policies from the early 20th century, Europe bears both political and moral responsibilities in this regard. It cannot shirk these responsibilities by citing concerns about Hamas or deficiencies in Kurdish political democracy, especially considering its alignment with some of the world's most undemocratic political regimes for its own interests.

Europe's efforts to support the Palestinian cause are commendable. However, in reality, peace, justice, and stability in the Middle East will remain elusive without addressing the Kurdish issue. David Fromkin begins his book *A Peace to End All Peace* with a quote from a British officer, stating that after a war that ended all wars, they made a peace that destroyed all peace. More than a century has passed since that unresolved reconciliation, yet the problems persist. Therefore, what is needed this time is a genuine reconciliation—one that truly resolves the underlying issues.