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# **“The settlement Enterprise”**

## **A Considerable Obstacle before the Two-State Solution**

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2021 marked the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 76) which was held in New York between 21 and 27 September. Many countries have expressed interest in the two-state solution as a means of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the USA, EU, Poland, Spain, Czech Republic, Russia, China, India, Norway, Mexico, Kenya and many others who believe that the only way to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is to carry out the two-state solution.

During the opening session of the UNGA76, the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged the two leaders, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and the Israeli Prime Minister, Naftali Bennett “to resume a meaningful dialogue”, “recognizing the two-State solution as the only pathway to a just and comprehensive peace.”<sup>1</sup>

Guterres call at the UNGA 76 echoed the world body's position of two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an important political solution to the conflict that would end Israel's occupation of the State of Palestine and the suffering of the Palestinian people and eventually create an independent, contiguous and viable Palestinian state and sustainable peace.

In his speech at the 76th General Assembly of the United Nations 76, the US President Joseph Biden also backed the two-state solution saying: "But I continue to believe that a two-state solution is the best way to ensure Israel's future as a Jewish democratic state, living in peace alongside a viable, sovereign and democratic Palestinian state."<sup>2</sup> ... Biden added: "we're a long way from that goal at this moment but we should never allow ourselves to give up on the possibility of progress."

Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marc Garneau, at the General Debate of the 76th United Nations General Assembly expressed his country's deep commitment to a Two-State solution that would address the needs and concerns of both sides, the Israelis and the Palestinians, encouraging them to initiate direct negotiations to reach a peaceful solution.

Additionally, Ireland's Prime Minister, Micheál Martin, stated that his country “... is committed to achieving a two State solution, with a viable State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders, alongside the State of Israel, living in peace and security, with Jerusalem as the capital of both states.” Prime Minister Martin also called on the international community “to come together to renew efforts for a just and lasting resolution, including through a reinvigorated Quartet”.

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<sup>1</sup> Secretary-General's address to the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly | United Nations Secretary-General. (2021). Retrieved 30 September 2021, from <https://www.un.org/sg/en/node/259283>

<sup>2</sup> Palestinian state 'best way' to resolve conflict with Israel: Biden - France 24. (2021). Retrieved 30 September 2021, from <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210921-palestinian-state-best-way-to-resolve-conflict-with-israel-biden>

While many countries expressed their concern of the ongoing conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians at the UNGA76 and the urgent need for a just and lasting peace between the two sides, on ground facts reveal Israel's unwillingness to resolve the conflict. Israel's Foreign Minister, Yair Lapid, during an interview with channel 11 on August 19, 2021, said that "A deal for a two-state resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be finalized while this government is led by Prime Minister Naftali Bennett", citing Bennett's strong rejection of two-state solution as a viable solution to the Israeli Palestinian Conflict. When asked if this would change after he [Lapid] replaces Bennett as prime minister in 2023, he declared that he supports separation from the Palestinians, without agreeing to the establishment of a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders, "I want to separate from the Palestinians," ... "I don't have any interest in ruling over 2 million Palestinians in Gaza or 2.9 million in Judea and Samaria."<sup>3</sup>

In an interview with the New York Times<sup>4</sup> on 23 August 2021, and days before his first meeting as prime minister of Israel with the US President Joe Biden, the Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett stated that he "would neither annex West Bank territory nor allow it to become a Palestinian state." Bennett also added that his Government "will continue the standard policy of the natural growth of West Bank settlements."<sup>5</sup>

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Between 1967 and 2019, the United Nations Security Council adopted more than 300 resolutions directly addressing the Arab–Israeli conflict, many of which concerned Palestinians; since 2012, a number of resolutions dealing directly with the current Palestinian State have been issued. UN Security Council resolution 446<sup>6</sup>, UN Security Council Resolution 465<sup>7</sup> and many others determined that Israel's policy and practices in creating settlements in Palestinian and other Arab lands seized since 1967 have no legal basis and are a substantial impediment to the achievement of a comprehensive, just, and

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<sup>3</sup> No Palestinian state under Bennett-led government, FM says

<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/no-palestinian-state-under-bennett-led-government-lapid-says-677235>

<sup>4</sup> *New Israeli Leader Backs Hard Line on Iran but Softer Tone With U.S.*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/24/world/middleeast/israel-bennett-biden-iran.html?partner=slack&smid=sl-share>

<sup>5</sup> Shahwan, N. (2021). With Bennett in power, no hope for Palestinian peace | Opinion. Retrieved 29 September 2021, from <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/with-bennett-in-power-no-hope-for-palestinian-peace>

<sup>6</sup> S/RES/446 (1979) of 22 March 1979. (2021). Retrieved 30 September 2021, from <https://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/BA123CDED3EA84A5852560E50077C2DC>

<sup>7</sup> 2-state solution not likely under Bennett-led government says Israeli foreign minister. (2021). Retrieved 29 September 2021, from <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/2-state-solution-not-likely-under-bennett-led-government-says-israeli-foreign-minister/2341352>

lasting peace in the Middle East. In the UN Security Council resolution 2334<sup>8</sup>, Israel's settlement activities is described as a "flagrant violation" of international law with "no legal validity". The resolution requests that Israel ceases such activities and fulfills its commitments under the Fourth Geneva Convention as an occupying power.

The obstacle to the two state solution is the settlement enterprise and the Settlers Defense Army. The area and resources available to a Palestinian state have been severely diminished because of the continuous rise of settlements in the West Bank and the Israeli government's strong support for settlements. As time passes, settlements expand, theoretically shrinking any future Palestinian state and possibly dividing it into noncontiguous fragments.

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<sup>8</sup> (2021). Retrieved 30 September 2021, from <https://www.un.org/webcast/pdfs/SRES2334-2016.pdf>