

A Political Opportunity Structure Analysis for the Recognition of Palestinian Statehood by European Countries

Hasbi Aswar

Department of International Relations, Universitas Islam Indonesia
E-mail: hasbiaswar@uii.ac.id

Rizki Dian Nursita

Department of International Relations, Universitas Islam Indonesia
E-mail: rizki.dian.nursita@uii.ac.id

Emil Hikmawan

Department of International Relations, Universitas Islam Indonesia
E-mail: 14323020@alumni.uui.ac.id

Zahara Aini Fijria Azzuhro

Department of International Relations, Universitas Islam Indonesia
E-mail: 21323274@alumni.uui.ac.id

Abstract

This study examines the political factors that influence the recognition of the State of Palestine by several European countries and the future trajectory of pro-Palestinian movements in the region. Using the theoretical framework of political opportunity structures within social movement studies—which encompasses institutional openness, elite division, alliances, and state repression—the study highlights how formal political support from European states creates wider space for pro-Palestinian movements to mobilize across Europe. The research employs a qualitative approach by tracing news coverage, public discourse, and opinion across major online media platforms in Europe. The findings show that the growing recognition of Palestine among European countries is driven by political openness in many European states toward pro-Palestinian activism; increasing support for Palestine among ruling elites; the strengthening of pro-Palestinian networks; and the relatively low level of state repression against pro-Palestinian movements in numerous European countries. Greater political opportunities resulting from Europe's increasing support for Palestine enhance the legitimacy of pro-Palestinian movements and create room for narrative shifts that are more objective and sympathetic toward the Palestinian issue. This development is significant given that dominant narratives in Europe have long tended to favor Israel. Thus, the political recognition of Palestine by European states contributes not only to the reconfiguration of public discourse but also to the strengthening of the political position of pro-Palestinian movements within Europe's social and political arenas.

Keywords: Europe, Palestine, political opportunity structure, political support, social movement.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menguraikan faktor-faktor politik yang mempengaruhi pengakuan negara Palestina oleh beberapa negara Eropa dan masa depan perkembangan gerakan pro-Palestina di kawasan tersebut. Studi ini menggunakan kerangka teori political opportunity structures yang dalam kajian gerakan sosial yang mencakup aspek institusi, keterbelahan elit, aliansi, dan represi negara, untuk menyoroti bagaimana dukungan politik formal dari negara-negara Eropa menciptakan ruang yang lebih luas bagi gerakan pro-Palestina untuk melakukan mobilisasi di Eropa. Kajian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan menelusuri liputan berita, wacana, dan opini publik di berbagai platform media daring utama di Eropa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meningkatnya pengakuan terhadap Palestina di antara negara-negara Eropa disebabkan oleh faktor keterbukaan politik di banyak negara Eropa terhadap gerakan pro-Palestina; meningkatnya dukungan terhadap Palestina oleh elit-elit pemerintah yang berkuasa, menguatkan jejaring gerakan pro-Palestina dan rendahnya represi terhadap gerakan-gerakan pro-Palestina di banyak negara Eropa. Peluang politik yang lebih terbuka akibat dukungan terhadap Palestina di Eropa meningkatkan legitimasi gerakan pro-Palestina dan menciptakan peluang bagi perubahan narasi yang lebih objektif dan simpatik terhadap isu Palestina. Hal ini penting mengingat narasi dominan di Eropa selama ini cenderung berpihak pada Israel. Dengan demikian, pengakuan politik terhadap Palestina oleh negara-negara Eropa berkontribusi pada pembentukan ulang wacana publik sekaligus memperkuat posisi politik gerakan pro-Palestina dalam arena politik dan sosial Eropa.

Kata kunci: dukungan politik, Eropa, gerakan sosial, Palestina, political opportunity structure

INTRODUCTION

The issue of Palestinian independence remains one of the most complex and prolonged questions in the modern international political system. Since the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) declared independence in 1988, more than 150 countries have recognized Palestine as a sovereign state. However, recognition from European countries over the past decades has remained limited and politically calculated due to their strategic ties with the United States and Israel. In this context, the decision of several European countries, such as Ireland, Spain, Norway, and Slovenia, to formally recognize Palestinian statehood in 2024, followed by many more European countries by 2025, including France and the United Kingdom, marks a significant turning point in Europe's diplomatic landscape.

The recognition of Palestinian statehood by European countries catalyzes the growth of activism and

public solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. Pro-Palestinian demonstrations across major European cities have risen significantly, indicating that political decisions at the state level have opened new spaces for civic participation in demanding justice and humanity for the Palestinian people. Such recognition can be understood as the opening of a new "political opportunity structure" that expands the legitimacy and visibility of pro-Palestinian movements globally.

Several previous studies have examined the issue of Palestine's recognition by European states. Based on an analysis of related research over the past 10 years, most studies were published between 2016 and 2019, following Sweden's recognition of Palestine in 2014, as reflected in the "Sweden" node in the metadata. During this period, the majority of publications focused on "law," "sovereignty," and "self-determination." The appearance of nodes such as "Kosovo," "Taiwan," and

When Sweden became the first European Union member to recognize Palestine in 2014, the decision triggered a domino effect, leading to parliamentary resolutions in countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Ireland, and Spain, as well as a European Parliament resolution supporting recognition “in principle” (Martins, 2015). The recognition of Palestine’s “right to statehood,” considered irrevocable, represents an initial step toward full diplomatic recognition (Kyris, 2024).

From an international law perspective, the recognition of Palestinian statehood places Palestine on an equal footing with other states, creating new opportunities for peacebuilding (Badarin, 2019). Recognition by Sweden, Ireland, Norway, and Spain, motivated by moral responsibility toward an occupied people, transforms Palestine from a political entity into a legitimate subject of international law. This legal and moral status strengthens the foundation for pro-Palestinian movements to seek justice for the ongoing occupation in international forums (Kyris, 2024).

The decisions of European countries to recognize Palestine cannot be separated from the broader context of political opportunities and international pressures, also influenced by the momentum of global pro-Palestinian movements. Political opportunity, alignment of interests, timing, and external patronage are key factors that determine the outcomes of state recognition (Stokes, 2019). These four factors explain the waves of recognition in 1988, when the PLO declared independence and received broad acknowledgment, and in 2012, when

Palestine’s status at the UN was elevated. Failure to obtain recognition, on the other hand, constrains Palestinians’ access to sovereignty, trade, foreign aid, and international legitimacy, underscoring the essential role of state recognition in the Palestinian struggle (Stokes, 2019).

This study frames the recognition of Palestinian statehood after the 2023 crisis within the context of social movement theory. It aims to explain how the recognition of Palestine by European countries expands space, legitimacy, and visibility for pro-Palestinian movements in the region. Academically, this research contributes to two main areas. In social movement studies, it extends the application of the Political Opportunity Structure (POS) theory from domestic settings to international relations, showing how foreign policy can serve as an enabling factor for mobilization. In the field of Palestinian studies, it offers a new perspective by emphasizing that the Palestinian struggle depends not only on political support from the Middle East but also on the moral and political legitimacy built through global solidarity, particularly within Europe.

Political Opportunity Structure Theory

The concept used in this study is the Political Opportunity Structure (POS), a theory in the study of social movements that explains the influence of state political structures on the success of social movements, either inhibiting or encouraging various collective actions (McAdam, 1996). Within this theoretical framework, four main elements make up the structure of political opportunity (S. Tarrow, 1996):

The first is openness of Political Institutions in which social movements tend to form and develop more easily when political institutions such as parliaments or courts are open and accessible to challenger actors. This access provides them with space to voice their demands and gain legitimacy within the existing system. The second is the existence of divisions among elite such as between political parties or bureaucracy, create strategic gaps that social movements can exploit. When elites are not united, the power of the status quo weakens, and the movement is more likely to intervene in policy or expand its influence.

The third is the presence of allies or alliances from influential groups or individuals, such as the media, NGOs, or sympathetic elites, can strengthen social movements' positions. The presence of these allies helps expand the movement's message, increase its legitimacy, and facilitate access to critical resources. The fourth is state repressive capacity or the level of repression by the state apparatus can affect participation in social movements. Repressive regimes tend to suppress participation and create fear, while the absence of repression reduces the risk for movement actors to act.

Research Methods

This study uses a descriptive, qualitative approach to analyze the relationship between European countries' recognition of Palestinian statehood and the development of pro-Palestinian movements in the region. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the political and social context in depth by exploring meaning, narrative, and the

interaction between state policies and civil society mobilization. The data used in this study consisted of official government documents and international institutions such as the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN), as well as secondary sources in the form of scientific journal articles, reports of research institutions, and credible media reports from 2024 to 2025 that reflect the dynamics of changing European political positions on the Palestinian issue. In addition, the study also examines the activities of civil society organizations, records of solidarity actions, advocacy networks, and pro-Palestinian digital campaigns in various countries. The analysis process focuses on the political factors that affect the recognition of Palestinian statehood and the impact that such policy changes may have on the strategy and legitimacy of the pro-Palestinian movement in Europe.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mapping the European Countries Support to Palestine

Since 2024, several diplomatic developments and shifts in public opinion in Europe have marked an increase in support for Palestinian independence. Countries such as Ireland, Spain, Norway, and Slovenia officially recognized Palestine as a sovereign state on May 28, 2024, for Ireland and Spain, and on June 4, 2024, for Slovenia. In addition, reports indicate that the total recognition by UN member states reached 147–157 out of 193 countries by 2025 (Ali, 2025).

Public surveys also show increased support among European citizens for Palestinian recognition and greater sympathy for the Palestinian people than

support for Israel. For example, a YouGov Eurotrack survey in several countries (including Spain, Italy, France, Germany, Denmark, and the United Kingdom) shows that positive views of Israel are at an all-time low, while sympathy for the Palestinians is increasing (Quds News Network, 2025). In Germany, a survey published in August 2025 said that about 54% of respondents supported the recognition of Palestine as an independent state; In the Left and Green Party voter groups, support is much higher (Ia, 2025).

In order, the countries that were recognized in 2024 to 2025 are: Ireland, Spain, Norway, Slovenia, Malta, France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Luxembourg, Andorra, Monaco, and Portugal.

In Ireland, there was a relatively broad elite consensus in support of the Palestinian right. The centre-right wing coalition (Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil) and the opposition (e.g, Sinn Féin) all criticized Israel's actions, even though the criticisms are on different levels. Although they failed, the opposition parties have tried to compel the government to refer Israel to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and expel Dana Erlich, Israel's ambassador (Carroll & O'Carroll, 2023).

On May 28, 2024, Ireland officially recognized the state of Palestine as a sovereign state. Ireland's support for Palestinian independence was also driven by public opinion that continued to urge Israel by holding a series of demonstrations, boycotts, and calls for sanctions carried out by the Irish people (Everett, 2023). Based on the survey results, 71% believe that Palestinians are living in apartheid under the rule of the Israeli government. 23 Irish civil

coalitions continue to campaign for the Irish Anti-Apartheid Campaign for Palestine (IAACP), which strongly condemns Israel's apartheid actions against Palestinians. Most of the parties' supporters agree that Palestinians live in an apartheid system established by Israel and are campaigning for an anti-apartheid movement (Hess, 2025).

Within the governing parties, 85% of Green Party supporters, 71% of Fianna Fáil supporters, and 56% of Fine Gael supporters agree that Israel upholds an apartheid system. Among the opposition, agreement reaches 100% among Solidarity People Before Profit supporters, 90% among Labour, 86% among the Social Democrats, 80% among Sinn Féin, and 41% among Aontú supporters. These broad levels of support across party lines underscore how public and political consensus in Ireland has shaped and legitimized the government's stance on Palestinian statehood (Amnesty International, 2024).

The mobilization of civil society in Ireland has played a huge role in supporting the Palestinians. After October 2023, the public marched across Ireland, and more than 600 academics signed a letter urging universities to sever institutional links with Israeli institutions (Carroll & O'Carroll, 2023). Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the largest civil organization in Ireland, has always supported the "Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions" (BDS) campaign since 2005. The Irish government is also active in sending humanitarian aid packages to the Gaza Strip, amounting to 6 million euros, through United Nations agencies. The sum of six million euros is divided into several subsidies, namely two million euros for UNICEF, two million

euros for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), one million euros for the World Food Programme (WFP), and one million euros for the World Health Organization (WHO). Through the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Ireland also sent 1,500 tents from Amman to Gaza (Wafa Agency, 2025).

Spain joins Ireland in issuing an official statement recognizing Palestine as a sovereign state on May 28, 2024. The Spanish government's decision was supported by public opinion, with 78% of the public fully supporting Palestinian independence. Spain's proximity to Arab countries is the background for most Spanish political parties participating in supporting Palestinian independence through the two-state solution. Through the leadership of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, supported by the Sumar political coalition, united left-wing parties, including the Spanish Communist Party and various progressive regional parties, as well as Basque and Catalan separatist parties. Spanish political parties strongly condemn Israel's actions and support Palestinian resistance to Israel and fully support the struggle for decolonization (Verstrynge, 2025). However, Spain's right-wing parties disagreed with Spain's move to recognize Palestine. Santiago Abascal, the president of Vox, a Spanish far-right party, argued that "What Spain has done is established a position of equidistance between satanic terrorism and a democratic state like Israel" (McMurty, 2024).

Spain is also actively involved in sending humanitarian aid to Palestine. The Spanish Foreign Minister, together with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), the

European Union, and about 20 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), is working with Palestine and actively sending humanitarian aid. Spain is committed to humanitarian aid for refugees and continues to increase the humanitarian funds sent to Palestine each year to more than 50 million euros. The humanitarian action carried out by Spain is a crucial step and a form of support to ensure the protection of Palestinian civilians who are victims of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

Slovenia begins following in the footsteps of countries such as Ireland, Norway, and Spain on June 4, 2024, by recognizing Palestine and supporting Palestine's bid to become a full member of the United Nations. Slovenia's decision to recognize a Palestinian state was taken after a parliamentary vote, with 52 of 90 assembly members voting in favor, none opposed, and some abstaining. Slovenia is a country that strongly condemns Israel's military actions and continues to urge accountability from the Israeli government. The recognition of the Palestinian state is motivated by Slovenia's moral obligation and the impulse of mass action with strong public opinion demanding Palestinian justice and peace (Euronews with AP, 2024).

Slovenia's decision to recognize Palestine was driven by its foreign policy, which is centered on a strong respect for international law and multilateral cooperation. As a form of support for Palestinian independence, Slovenia intervened at the International Court of Justice, demanding the right of Palestinians to determine the fate of the state, full sovereignty over the occupied Palestinian territories, and the freedom

of Palestine to establish its sovereign and independent state (Cafiero, 2024).

Slovenia consistently calls for and affirms, both collectively and individually, the principle of equal rights and the right to self-determination for the people, in accordance with the provisions of the UN Charter. The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia states that the right to self-determination is one of the foundations for strengthening the multilateral system. Slovenia's firm support for Palestinian independence is also motivated by the country's history of pursuing independence through civil struggle, fighting for democracy and human rights, and demanding the right to determine the fate of its own country (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, 2024).

Since the 2023 war in Gaza, Slovenia's support for Palestine has also been seen in the financial and material assistance that continues to be delivered through UNRWA. Slovenia has a joint commitment with UNRWA and continues to ensure that UNRWA serves Palestinian refugees. This was reinforced by Slovenia's agreement to continue supporting UNRWA and to fund €4 million over the next four years from 2025 to 2028. Support for Palestinian Independence is driven by the strength of the Slovenian government, which continues to uphold its foreign policy and agrees to fund Palestinian refugees through UNRWA (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, 2025).

By 2025, the number of countries that support Palestine as a country continued to increase, including Belgium, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, France, and the United Kingdom. Belgium became one of the countries that supported

Palestinian independence by emphasizing the two-state solution adopted by the UN General Assembly and by signing the New York Declaration (Reuters, 2025). In addition, the Belgian government also promised to impose sanctions on Israel, namely a ban on imports, a review of the government's procurement policy with Israeli companies, restrictions on consular assistance for Belgian citizens living in illegal settlements under international law, potential prosecutions, a ban on flights and transit, an arms embargo and the inclusion of two Israeli extremist ministers and some settlers as "persona non grata" (Time, 2025).

The Belgian government's support for Palestinian independence was also followed by the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza totaling 12.5 million euros, subsidizing the UN World Food Program by 350,000 Euros, and calling for the establishment of a UN intervention force in Gaza to regulate the distribution of food aid (Vrt News, 2025). Then the Belgian government emphasized that Belgium will support measures to suspend cooperation with Israel at the European level, such as suspending the Association Agreement with the European Union, as well as research and technical cooperation (Euro News, 2025).

Belgium's decision supports Palestinian independence based on the humanitarian tragedy that befell Palestinians, particularly in Gaza, and also in response to Israel's violence in violation of the provisions of international law. The Belgian government supports Palestinian independence due to public pressure expressed through demonstrations (CNN Indonesia, 2025). In addition, several

political parties in Belgium that support Palestinian independence include The Reformist Movement, The Flemish Liberals & Democrats, The Christian-Democratic & Flemish Party, and The New Flemish Alliance, which send their motion of support for Palestine to the Belgian Parliament (Vrt News, 2025). In other words, the Flemish party and the federal government party reached an agreement on the conflict in Gaza and have a firmer stance on violence in Gaza.

Another important point is that Belgium is also bound by the European Union's foreign policy, which generally supports the recognition of a Palestinian state as part of a larger peace process in the Middle East. It follows that the European Union openly supports the two-state solution and urges Israel and Palestine to reach a peace agreement based on a secure and recognized border.

Luxembourg on the one hand also stated that it was ready to recognize the state of Palestine during the UN General Assembly Session. This was conveyed by Prime Minister Luc Frieden, who emphasized efforts to strengthen the solution to the two countries marginalized by the escalation of the conflict through the signing of the New York Declaration (The Luxembourg Government, 2025). In his speech, Prime Minister Luc Frieden said that the recognition was made because the two-state solution remains the only viable option for lasting peace. Luxembourg's public pressure is one of the influential factors of the country's policy towards Israeli atrocities in Gaza, as evidenced by the protests carried out by more than 40 civil society groups, political parties, and trade unions urging the Luxembourg government to impose economic

sanctions and use diplomatic pressure against Israel (RTL, 2025).

Malta is also among the countries that recognize the state of Palestine. This was conveyed by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malta, Christopher Cutajar, by handing over an official letter from Prime Minister Robert Abela to the Palestinian Ambassador to Malta, confirming Malta's commitment to recognize Palestine at the 80th UN General Assembly in New York (The Independent, 2025). The Maltese government's support for the recognition of the state of Palestine coincided with the delivery of 250 tons of humanitarian aid flour from Malta to Gaza aimed at alleviating the humanitarian crisis (Metro Tv News, 2025). Malta also has a history of providing support for the Palestinian struggle by voicing a two-state solution. Then the Maltese government itself came under increasing pressure from within its ranks to immediately recognize a Palestinian state. In mid-July 2025, Malta's center-right opposition also called for the recognition of Palestine (Kompas, 2025).

In a statement by Prime Minister Luis Montenegro, Portugal officially recognized the state of Palestine by declaring that a two-state solution is the only path to peace for Palestine and Israel (The New York Times, 2025). Portugal tends to adopt a diplomatic approach focused on dialogue and negotiation. By recognizing Palestine as an independent state, Portugal seeks to encourage the Palestinians to achieve their political goals peacefully and respectfully and to support the peace process in the Middle East. A rally also took place in the center of Lisbon, Portugal, attended by more than 3,000 people to show solidarity with

Palestinians. Among those participating were former Left Bloc leader Francisco Louca and Communist Party presidential candidate Antonio Filipe (Xinhua, 2025). In addition, according to the Portuguese newspaper *Correio da Manhã*, Prime Minister Luis Montenegro consulted with the president and parliament before finalizing the decision to recognize a Palestinian state (Al-Jazeera, 2025). This marks the end of the nearly 15-year debate in the West European country's parliament because the proposal for the recognition of a Palestinian state was first put forward by the country's Left Bloc political party in 2011.

France is a country that has close ties to Israel and is a member of the G7 that declared its support for Palestinian independence. Although Israel strongly condemned the move, France still called for a ceasefire and the release of hostages. The French government, through its foreign policy, is pushing for a two-state resolution with the goal of peace and an end to the Palestinian Israeli conflict. France's support for Palestinian independence is strengthened by the emergence of global outrage over the famine in the Gaza Strip (Reuters, 2025).

Historically, France's support for and declaration of Palestinian independence were a realization of its commitment to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, ultimately leading France to recognize the state of Palestine. France became the first G7 member country to recognize Palestinian independence as a sovereign state. The impulse in support of Palestinian independence also emerged through French public opinion. Protests organized by five unions in a nationwide "grand demonstration" march in Paris,

condemning all Israeli acts of lethality and atrocities in the Gaza Strip. Thousands of demonstrators angrily pressure Israel to stop committing genocide against Palestinians (Couvellaire, 2025).

The increasingly unified stance of European countries is also reflected in public opinion. The positions taken by governments and dominant political parties have further strengthened Europe's collective response to various violations committed by Israel in Gaza and the West Bank. Since 2025, European countries have issued joint statements—such as their condemnation of Israel's plan to expand occupied territory in East Jerusalem in 2025, in which the European coalition urged Israel to halt the plan and warned of its long-term consequences, namely the perpetuation of violence and prolonged instability (EEAS Press Team, 2025). In response to the issue of food blockades and restrictions on humanitarian assistance in Gaza, the group of European countries also issued a joint statement calling on Israel to lift the blockade on humanitarian aid (Directorate General ECHO), 2025).

In addition to humanitarian considerations and public pressure, political factors and Europe's relations with Muslim-majority countries have also become important drivers behind the shift in European attitudes toward Palestine. This trend is reinforced by the growing international support for Palestine, as well as the fact that recognition of Palestinian statehood has now reached a majority within the United Nations. Consequently, the rising political support for Palestine, combined with strong public demands and the severe humanitarian consequences of the

conflict, has compelled European states to recalibrate their positions and adopt a more pro-Palestinian stance.

Political Opportunity Structure Analysis

Using the framework of political opportunity theory, it shows that the growing support among European countries for the recognition of Palestine from 2024 to 2025 cannot be separated from domestic political dynamics and the strengthening of public pressure across various countries.

First, the openness of political institutions is evident in the decision-making processes in countries such as Ireland, Spain, Slovenia, Belgium, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, France, and the United Kingdom, which, through their parliaments and democratic mechanisms, officially recognize Palestine as a sovereign state. The countries are also pro-active in expressing their rejection of Israel's blockades and attacks on Gaza that are carried out jointly through joint statements. Open access to political institutions and the pro-active gestures of the European governments enable the Palestinian issue to be included in the national policy agenda, thereby granting public demands formal legitimacy.

Second, divisions among political elites have also created space for policy changes such as in Spain, Belgium, and Portugal where left-wing parties, progressive groups, and some government elites are actively pressuring the government to take a more assertive stance toward Israel, thus opening opportunities for a policy of Palestinian recognition. Although there are political groups, including the public, who try to counter-opinion and still support Israel,

their narratives are obscured by the enthusiasm of the public who actively voice support for Palestine both in the public sphere and in the mass media.

Third, the presence of allies or alliances plays an important role in strengthening this support through alliances among the government, media, NGOs, and civil society movements, ultimately enhancing the legitimacy of the Palestinian solidarity movement. This is the case in Ireland and Spain, where trade union networks, left-wing political parties, and pro-Palestinian organizations such as the Irish Anti-Apartheid Campaign for Palestine (IAACP) and the Sumar coalition have helped shape public opinion and influence foreign policy.

The emergence of this massive public movement in Europe cannot be separated from the massive and globalized pro-Palestinian movement and the continuous news on social media that directly shows the enormous impact of Israel's indiscriminate attacks and blockades in Palestinian Gaza (Gutknecht, 2026). These social media channels were finally able to stem the efforts of the mainstream media that tried to cover up Israel's crimes through their publications. This is what makes these movements unstoppable and has a great impact on the change in the political attitudes of political regimes in Europe (Rahman, 2025).

Fourth, the relatively low state repressive capacity of European countries allows people to carry out massive demonstrations, boycott campaigns, solidarity actions, and street protests without significant barriers. This condition makes public mobilization a strong factor in pressuring the government to be more assertive against

Israel, especially after the escalation of violence in Gaza in 2023. This decline in repression also goes hand in hand with the change in the attitude of the government in European countries which is in line with the public's wishes, namely, to condemn Israel's policies towards Palestine.

In view of the above facts, the increased recognition of Palestine by European countries between 2024 and 2025 is the result of the interaction between open political opportunities. These elite dynamics provide room for change, support from a wide network of allies, and low state repression of public mobilization. These four elements strengthened the pro-Palestinian movement and enabled their demands to be heard and adopted by governments across Europe.

Compared to previous years especially before 7 October 2023, the unstoppable impact of Israel's atrocities on Gaza has opened new political space at the public level in European countries that ultimately influences the political stance of governments in those countries as well. With these developments in Europe, it can be expected that the pro-Palestinian movement will enter a stronger phase. At the same time, pro-Palestinian narratives will become large-scale counter-narratives in the region that has been very pro-Israel for a long time. Given the current political conditions, the prospects for the pro-Palestinian movement in Europe are likely to continue to strengthen, driven by broad civil society support, political fragmentation among elites, and limited state repression of public mobilization. This provides room for the pro-Palestinian movement to continue to

influence policymakers to push for recognition of Palestine, push for an embargo against Israel, and strengthen support for legal sanctions against Israel.

Nonetheless, the movement also faces significant challenges, including strong pressure from pro-Israel groups at the political level, increasing public polarization, and the emergence of security discourses that can limit the space for protest. In addition, the electoral dynamics that rotate the political elite in Europe could change the landscape of elite support for the pro-Palestinian movement. In addition, the consistency of public support may weaken as global issues change and as competition for other political agendas intensifies. Therefore, although the political opportunities for supporting Palestine currently appear large, the continuity of these movements and narratives depends heavily on pro-Palestinian solidarity networks' ability to build coalitions across issues and respond to the ever-changing political dynamics of Europe.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the increased recognition of Palestine by various European countries in the 2024–2025 period is a direct consequence of the formation of a conducive political opportunity structure. The openness of political institutions provides a formal channel for the Palestinian issue to enter the decision-making process. At the same time, fragmentation at the elite level weakens the position of groups that previously maintained a pro-Israel policy orientation.

At the same time, the existence of a broad alliance between civil society

organizations, trade unions, progressive political parties, and humanitarian agencies strengthens the moral and political legitimacy of the pro-Palestinian movement. The state's limited repressive capacity for public mobilization allows the building of significant social pressure through demonstrations, solidarity campaigns, and political advocacy. The interaction of these four elements creates political opportunities that encourage European countries to adopt Palestinian recognition policies in response to domestic dynamics and international developments.

However, this movement also faces several important challenges, including

pressure from pro-Israel groups which is still strong at the political level, increasing public polarization, the emergence of security discourse which has the potential to limit space for protests, and the dynamics of elections in several European countries which can narrow existing opportunities, including changes in global issues which can weaken public support for the Palestinian issue. Therefore, the continued influence of the pro-Palestinian movement will depend largely on its ability to maintain solidarity, build coalitions across issues, and respond to Europe's changing political dynamics.

REFERENCES

- Al-Jazeera. (2025). Portugal to recognise a Palestinian state. *Al-Jazeera*. Accessed from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/9/20/portugal-to-recognise-a-palestinian-state#:~:text=‘The Ministry of Foreign Affairs,be buried under the rubble.>
- Ali, M. (2025, September 23). Which are the 150+ countries that have recognised Palestine as of 2025?. *Al Jazeera*. Accessed from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/9/23/which-are-the-150-countries-that-have-recognised-palestine-as-of-2025.>
- Amnesty International. (2024, January 18). New poll shows an overwhelming majority of Irish people believe Palestinians live under an Israeli apartheid system. *Amnesty International Ireland*. <https://www.amnesty.ie/israeli-apartheid-poll/>.
- Cafiero, G. (2024, May 28). Slovenia's 'moral duty': What's behind its push to recognise Palestine?. *Al-Jazeera*. Accessed from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/28/slovenias-moral-duty-whats-behind-the-push-to-recognise-palestine.>
- CNN Indonesia. (2025). Tens of Thousands of Belgians Demonstrate in Support of Palestine, Urge Israeli Sanctions. *CNN Indonesia*. Accessed from <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/internasional/20250907220621-134-1270980/puluhan-ribu-warga-belgia-demo-dukung-palestina-desak-sanksi-israel.>
- Couvelaire, L. (2025, June 15). At Paris protest in support of Gaza, anger and fear run high. *Lemonde.fr*. Accessed from <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/franc>

- e/article/2025/06/15/at-paris-protest-in-support-of-gaza-anger-and-fear-run-high_6742365_7.html.
- Directorate General ECHO). (2025). *Joint statement on the humanitarian situation in Gaza—European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations*. https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/news/joint-statement-humanitarian-situation-gaza-2025-08-12_en.
- EEAS Press Team. (2025, August 22). *Joint statement on the Occupied Palestinian Territories | EEAS*. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/joint-statement-occupied-palestinian-territories_en.
- Erstryng, L. (2025, April 1). Why Spain stands with Palestine. *Le Monde Diplomatique*. Accessed from <https://mondediplo.com/2025/04/14spain-palestine>.
- Euronews with AP. (2024, April 6). Slovenia becomes latest EU country to recognise Palestinian state. *Euronews*. Accessed from <http://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/06/04/slovenia-becomes-latest-european-country-to-recognise-palestinian-state-after-parliamentar>.
- Euro News. (2025). Belgium to recognise Palestine at the UN General Assembly. *Euro News*. Accessed from <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/09/02/belgium-to-recognise-palestinian-state-at-the-un-general-assembly>.
- Everett, M. (2023, November 17). As Israel bombs Gaza, Ireland's enduring support of Palestine gets stronger. *Al Jazeera*. Accessed from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/17/as-israel-bombs-gaza-irelands-enduring-support-of-palestine-gets-stronger>.
- Gutknecht, L. (2026). «Please don't scroll»: *Social Media as Humanitarian Communication in Gaza*. <https://allegralaboratory.net/please-dont-scroll-social-media-as-humanitarian-communication-in-gaza/>.
- Hess, A. (2025, September 30). Why is Palestine so important in Ireland? *Euronews*. Accessed from <http://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/09/30/why-is-palestine-so-important-in-ireland>.
- Kompas. (2025). Malta Declares to Recognize Palestinian State in September 2025. *Kompas*. Accessed from <https://www.kompas.com/tren/read/2025/08/02/160000065/malta-deklarasikan-bakal-mengakui-negara-palestina-pada-september-2025>.
- Metro TV News. (2025). Malta will recognize Palestinian independence today at the UN Assembly. *Metro TV News*. Accessed from <https://www.metrotvnews.com/read/NLMCJM7x-malta-bakal-akui-kemerdekaan-palestina-hari-ini-di-sidang-pbb#:~:text=Valletta: Malta will officially, its Facebookaccount%2C September 22, 2025>.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2024, May 29). Minister Albares reaffirms humanitarian and political

- commitment to NGOs in Palestine. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. Accessed from https://www.exteriores.gob.es/en/Comunicacion/Noticias/Paginas/Noticias/20240529_MINISTERIO06.aspx.
- Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. (2024, February 23). At ICJ, Slovenia stresses the right of Palestinians to self-determination | GOV.SI. *Portal GOV.SI*. Accessed from <https://www.gov.si/en/news/2024-02-23-at-icj-slovenia-stresses-the-right-of-palestinians-to-self-determination/>.
- Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. (2025, September 2). Slovenia increases support for UNRWA | GOV.SI. *Portal GOV.SI*. Accessed from <https://www.gov.si/en/news/2025-09-02-slovenia-increases-support-for-unrwa/>.
- Nia, O. T. (2025, October 8). Survey says most Germans back recognition of Palestine. *Anadolu Ajansi*. Accessed from <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/survey-says-most-germans-back-recognition-of-palestine/3655581>.
- Quds News Network. (2025, June 4). Public Support for Israel in Western Europe Hits Record Low Amid Gaza Genocide: YouGov. *Countercurrents*. Accessed from <https://countercurrents.org/2025/06/public-support-for-israel-in-western-europe-hits-record-low-amid-gaza-genocide-yougov/>.
- Rahman, M. A. (2025, May 23). *Europe Increasingly Critical of Israel*. Kompas.id. Accessed from <https://www.kompas.id/artikel/en-eropa-semakin-kritis-terhadap-israel-2>.
- Reuters. (2025, July 25). Why is France recognising Palestinian statehood and who else has? *Reuters*. Accessed from <https://www.reuters.com/world/why-is-france-recognising-palestinian-statehood-who-else-has-2024-05-23/>.
- Reuters. (2025). Belgium to recognise Palestinian state at UN General Assembly. *Reuters*. Accessed from <https://www.reuters.com/en/belgium-recognise-palestinian-state-un-general-assembly-2025-09-02/>.
- RTL. (2025). Protest in the capital over Gaza crisis. *RTL Today*. Accessed from <https://today.rtl.lu/news/luxembourg/a/2340718.html>.
- The Independent. (2025). Malta officially recognises the State of Palestine. *Independent*. Accessed from <https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2025-09-22/local/Malta-officially-recognises-the-State-of-Palestine-6736273350>.
- The Luxembourg Government. (2025). Luxembourg formally recognises the State of Palestine. *gouvernement.lu*. Accessed from https://gouvernement.lu/en/actualites/toutes_actualites/communiqués/2025/09-septembre/22-frieden-ny-palestine.html.
- The New York Times. (2025). Britain, Australia, Canada and Portugal Recognize a Palestinian State. *Nytimes*. Accessed from <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/21/world/europe/starmer-uk-recognize-palestinian-state.html>.

- Time. (2025). Belgium to Recognize Palestinian State at U.N. General Assembly and Sanction Israel. *Time.com*. Accessed from <https://time.com/7313858/belgium-to-recognize-palestinian-state-sanction-israel-response/>.
- Vrt News. (2025). Belgium to recognise Palestine in due course. *vrt.be*. Accessed from <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/en/2025/09/02/belgium-to-recognise-palestine-in-due-course/>.
- Xinhua. (2025). Thousands rally in Lisbon in support of Gaza and detained Portuguese citizens. Accessed from http://www.china.org.cn/world/Of_f_the_Wire/2025-10/05/content_118110620.shtml.
- Badarin, E. (2019). States Recognition in Foreign Policy: The Case of Sweden's Recognition of Palestine. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 15(4), 498–517.
- Iriqat, D. (2024). Paradiplomacy for Non-recognized States: Case of Palestine. *International Relations and Diplomacy*, 12(1), 34–39.
- Kyris, G. (2024). The Recognition of a Right to Statehood and Palestine. *Ethnopolitics. Advance online publication*. DOI: 10.1080/17449057.2024.2362510
- Martins, B. O. (2015). “A Sense of Urgency”: The EU, EU Member States and the Recognition of the Palestinian State. *Mediterranean Politics*, 20(2), 281–287.
- Rezazadeh, H., & Ranjbarian, A. (2019). Shenasaiei Jam’ei Felestin; Ozvayat dar Sazman-e Melal-e Motahed [Collective Recognition of Palestine: Membership in the United Nations]. *Faslname-ye Motale’at Hoquq-e ‘Omumi (Journal of Public Law Studies)*, 49(1), 77–95. (in Persian)
- Stokes, D. (2019). Political Opportunities and the Quest for Political Recognition in Tibet, Taiwan, and Palestine. *International Review of Sociology*, 29(1), 102–124.
- Wafa Agency. (2025, October 14). Ireland announces additional €6 million in humanitarian aid for Gaza. *Wafa Agency*. Accessed from <http://wafa.ps/Pages/Details/163374>.