

**More Than 100 Former French and British Diplomats:
Israel Is Erasing Palestine Before the Eyes of the World**

**British and French Recognition of the State of Palestine
Must Not Remain Symbolic, It Must Be Followed by Political,
Legal and Economic Action**

23 August 2026

Report

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The letter was published on 22 August 2026 and addressed to French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Andy Burnham.

Who Are the “More Than 100 Diplomats”?

The letter was signed by 52 former French diplomats and 50 former British ambassadors and diplomats, bringing the total number of signatories to 102.

Among them are individuals who held very senior positions, including former ambassadors to the United Nations, former directors responsible for Middle East affairs at the British and French foreign ministries, and former ambassadors to countries across the region, including Egypt, Iran, Bahrain, Israel, Syria, Türkiye, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Prominent British signatories include Jeremy Greenstock and Emyr Jones Parry, both former UK ambassadors to the United Nations, as well as Edward Chaplin, a former director responsible for Middle East affairs at the British Foreign Office.

On the French side, prominent names include Yves Aubin de la Messuzière, Bernard Bajelet, Patrice Paoli and Stanislas de Laboulaye, among others with extensive diplomatic experience in the region.

Why Did They Issue the Letter Now?

The letter comes amid growing concern that Israeli policies in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem are effectively destroying the possibility of establishing a viable Palestinian state, particularly amid accelerating settlement expansion, the E1 project, escalating settler violence, the demolition of Palestinian homes, forced displacement and the continuing war in Gaza.

The signatories argue that Palestine is being erased before the eyes of the world, and

that British and French recognition of the State of Palestine in 2025 must not remain merely symbolic. Rather, they argue, recognition must be followed by political, legal and economic action to protect the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

Exceptionally Strong Language

The letter is notable because it does not confine itself to cautious diplomatic language. It explicitly accuses the Israeli government of working to destroy the prospect of Palestinian statehood.

According to the signatories, the combination of home demolitions, settler violence, and the complicity of or failure by Israeli police and military forces to provide protection amounts to what they describe as ethnic cleansing.

According to published coverage of the letter, the signatories also argue that the world no longer regards Israel as a "genuine democracy", because depriving another people of their rights and land is incompatible with any claim to democracy.

What Exactly Are the Diplomats Demanding?

The letter goes beyond condemnation and proposes a package of concrete measures, including:

- Implementing and respecting the decisions of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) and rejecting double standards in the application of international law.
- Suspending the EU-Israel Association Agreement, as well as the UK-Israel trade and partnership arrangements, over what the signatories regard as serious violations of human rights and international law.
- Suspending transfers of arms and military equipment to and from Israel, as well as relevant forms of military cooperation.
- Ensuring unrestricted humanitarian access to Gaza, with a central role for UNRWA, UN agencies and international humanitarian organizations, while allowing access for journalists, diplomats and parliamentarians.
- Banning trade, investment and financial services connected to Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
- Warning companies against participating in the E1 project or other settlement projects and imposing commercial and financial consequences on entities involved in such activities.
- Criminalizing the purchase by French or British citizens of property or land built on confiscated or seized Palestinian land, and withdrawing charitable or tax privileges from organizations financing settlements.

What Does the Letter Say About Gaza?

The signatories condemn the 7 October 2023 attacks, while stressing that they do not justify the destruction of Gaza or the collective punishment of its population, nor policies that, in their assessment, contribute to erasing or dismantling Palestinian society.

They also emphasize the need to guarantee humanitarian access and end restrictions on journalism and international monitoring.

What Does It Say About the West Bank?

The letter links settlement expansion, home demolitions, settler violence, land seizures and the lack of accountability, arguing that these elements form part of a broader trajectory that is undermining Palestinian statehood and creating a reality of de facto annexation.

The letter was issued only days after intensified European debate over the E1 settlement project, which Western governments have warned would undermine the territorial contiguity of the West Bank and further jeopardize the two-state solution.

Why Is the Letter Politically Significant?

Its significance derives not only from the number of signatories but also from who they are.

These are not ordinary activists or party political figures. They are individuals who served for decades within the British and French diplomatic establishments, many of whom were directly responsible for Middle East policy.

Their shift from traditional diplomatic expressions such as “concern” and calls for “restraint” toward terms such as “ethnic cleansing,” “erasing Palestine” and “double standards” therefore reflects a significant change in the position of a segment of the former European diplomatic establishment.

Why Did They Focus on France and the United Kingdom?

The letter argues that London and Paris bear a particular responsibility for two principal reasons: their historical role in shaping the modern political order of the Middle East and their status as permanent members of the UN Security Council.

Both countries also recognized the State of Palestine in 2025. The signatories therefore argue that they must now take measures that give that recognition practical and tangible effect.

The Legal Dimension of the Letter

The letter is based on the principle that international law cannot be applied selectively.

It therefore calls on France and the United Kingdom to comply with decisions of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, and to employ practical economic and political measures against those involved in violations of international law, whether they are officials, settlers or companies.

This is particularly significant because the signatories are not simply demanding an end to the war. They are calling for the creation of real consequences for violations of international law through trade, arms transfers, investment and property transactions.



Is the Letter Unconditionally Pro-Palestinian?

Not entirely.

Alongside its criticism of Israel, the letter also calls for reform of the Palestinian leadership, elections, effective democratic institutions and political unity between Gaza and the West Bank.

Its approach therefore extends beyond criticism of Israeli policies and presents a broader vision for a viable Palestinian political future.

Conclusion

The significance of the letter can be summarized as a shift from diplomatic condemnation toward demands for specific sanctions and concrete legal and economic measures.

The signatories do not merely state that settlements are illegal; they call for banning trade connected to them.

They do not merely state that the war in Gaza has been devastating; they call for suspending arms transfers.

They do not simply criticize the E1 project; they call for consequences for companies participating in it.

And they do not merely invoke international law; they demand compliance with the decisions of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

The letter can therefore be regarded as one of the strongest collective interventions by former French and British diplomats on Palestine in recent years.

The End