



[Israel Denies Access to Arab Foreign Ministers Seeking to Visit Palestinian President Abbas in Ramallah](#)

Israel's decision to block the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Turkey from a planned visit with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah this past weekend has garnered widespread condemnation for being a flagrant violation of international law and a setback for peace efforts. In its official statement reacting to the denial of access, the Arab ministerial delegation remarked that it showed "the extent of the Israeli government's arrogance, its disregard for international law, and its continued implementation of illegal measures and policies that besiege the Palestinian people." The move comes amid already growing international criticism of Israel's actions in both the occupied West Bank and Gaza – including its illegal settlement expansion in the former and war crimes in the latter – and is therefore certain to deepen its diplomatic isolation. The denial of access to the group of foreign ministers also takes place ahead of a planned international conference in New York later this month, co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia, that is slated to discuss the issue of Palestinian statehood. For impartial observers, it is clear that Israel's decision is aimed at trying to undermine and derail initiatives in support of this.

As analysts have highlighted, Israel's rejection of the visit demonstrates how brazen its obstruction efforts to Palestinian statehood have become and the level of deterioration in its ties with other countries in the region. Saudi Arabia, which was set to lead the blocked delegation of foreign ministers to Ramallah, has consistently expressed – since the onset of the Gaza War – that there is no prospect of it normalizing relations with Israel in the absence of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Before the Gaza War, some speculated that Saudi Arabia and Israel may have been moving closer to the possibility of normalizing ties, but Israel's denial of access to the foreign ministers exemplifies – as one expert put it – how far Saudi Arabia and Israel have moved from potential normalization to diplomatic confrontation. There have been indications of increased friction between Israel and other countries in the region as well. Recently, the UAE was reported to have summoned Israel's ambassador to its foreign ministry for a dressing down, with Emirati officials stating that the ambassador was given angry messages to send back to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu.

On top of being a testament to its indifference towards international norms, many see Israel's denial of access to the foreign ministers as a glaring attempt to disrupt growing global momentum in support of Palestinian recognition and social justice. The aforementioned upcoming international conference later this month in New York co-chaired by Saudi Arabia and France could serve as a critical means for rallying and broadening this, and the planned delegation of foreign ministers' visit to Ramallah was intended to spur further progress in advance of it. Thus, it is obvious that Israel sought to hinder regional initiatives to solidify support in the lead up to the approaching conference in New York. While the Netanyahu government seeks to obstruct these diplomatic channels, it is hoped that its actions will not have a damaging impact on the wider global sentiment as a whole given that there is increasingly international, especially European, criticism towards Israel's policies. As such, there is optimism that the upcoming conference can be leveraged to secure additional Palestinian recognitions and elevate its status within the United Nations as well.

The latest situation with the group of foreign ministers is not the only time that Israel has elicited recent denunciation for its behavior towards diplomatic delegations in the occupied West Bank. A few weeks ago, more

than a dozen governments condemned Israeli forces for firing shots in the direction of a foreign delegation of diplomats which included representatives from the European Union, the United Kingdom, Canada, Russia, China, Japan, and others. The incident prompted a wave of outrage and widespread calls for an investigation from world leaders and the United Nations. Videos that were shared on social media showed delegation members providing media interviews when shots rang out, forcing them to run for cover. All told, regular transgressive occurrences like this one and the denial of access to foreign ministers illustrates Israel's systematic disregard for international law and human rights.