

## The goals of Armenia's recognition of Palestine

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On 21.06.2024 it became known that the Republic of Armenia officially recognized the State of Palestine. Tel Aviv's reaction was immediate, and on the same day it was announced that the Armenian Ambassador to Israel would be summoned to the Israeli Foreign Ministry for clarifications. Islamic countries also quickly responded to the recognition. Turkey was one of the first to express its satisfaction with Yerevan's decision. It was followed by the League of Arab States (LAS) and the governments of Qatar, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. Finally, Hamas representatives issued a corresponding statement: *"We welcome Armenia's statement on the calling of the State of Palestine and consider this as another important step towards the recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people by the international community, as well as a new, fresh chapter in the history of relations between our two friendly nations"*.

The decision of the Armenian authorities caused no less controversy within the country than in the international arena. In particular, some political circles and part of the public opposed to the authorities accepted the event as Ankara's initiative, which allegedly put pressure on Yerevan. This version goes in line with the fact of the telephone conversation between R. Erdogan and N. Pashinyan, which took place the day before the corresponding statement by the RA Foreign Ministry. The fact that during the 44-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh Hamas expressed its support for Azerbaijan and later congratulated it on the *"victory in the liberation campaign"* is also actively discussed. Finally, the narrative that the RA, which did not recognize the Republic of Artsakh, is now *"immediately"* recognizing the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and sovereignty has been widely promoted in recent days.

Considering the opacity of the Armenian government's foreign policy activities, the emergence of the above, as well as other versions and arguments, in the Armenian environment is a natural phenomenon. At the same time, however, there are several nuances that are not visible to the general public and that shed light on the reasons for the *"objective necessity"* of the Armenian government's step.

Firstly, against the backdrop of the current international wave of recognition of Palestine, Yerevan's step cannot be considered an *"untimely initiative"* that will allegedly create major foreign policy problems for Armenia.

Secondly, the overwhelming of the European community states, with which the current Armenian government has chosen integration as a long-term strategic goal, considers Palestinian independence as *"the only and the inevitable"* solution to the Middle East problem.

Thirdly, the recognition of Palestine will serve as an additional impetus for the strengthening Armenia's relations with Arab countries, the Islamic world and especially with Iran, which is currently the main supporter of Palestine. This step should be considered a

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friendly gesture to Iran, not to Turkey, which probably wanted to induce Yerevan to such a decision.

Fourthly, the inevitable complication of Armenia's relations with Israel should hardly be considered an existential factor, since official Tel Aviv, even without Armenian recognition of Palestine, has contributed in every possible way to the situation that Armenian-Israeli relations are not at the highest level. The proof of this is Tel Aviv's support for Baku during the Nagorno-Karabakh war in 2020, the exclusively pro-Azerbaijani stance of the Jewish state on all international platforms, the systematic supply of Israeli weapons to Azerbaijan, and etc. Even after I. Aliyev declared during his visit to Egypt that he supports the idea of "two states" (*de facto* recognition of Palestine), the Israeli authorities did not make any *demarche* against the allied Azerbaijan. Baku's cargo planes continue to make flights for weapons to the Israeli Ovda airfield, and Azerbaijani oil continues to flow steadily to Tel Aviv. Thus, in the context of Armenian-Israeli relations, it should be noted that "non-recognition of Palestine" would hardly give Yerevan a chance to conceptually improve its relations with the Jewish state.

Fifthly, the reference to congratulations received by Baku from Hamas is not entirely correct, as Hamas is not identical with Palestine itself. This is an organization that until recently controlled the Gaza Strip, while "*mainland*" Palestine is controlled by "Fatah", which is known to be more loyal to Armenia and Armenians. A proof of this is Mahmoud Abbas' appointment of ethnic Armenian Mrs. Varsen Aghabekyan as the Palestinian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in March 2024. This appointment, combined with Yerevan's initiative on Palestine, could be a good incentive to bring Armenian-Palestinian and Armenian-Arab relations to a qualitatively new level.

And finally, sixthly, recognition of the Palestinian people's right to independence, if not now, then in the medium term, will contribute to the revival of the Karabakh problem, including the issues of Baku's responsibility for ethnic cleansing, the right of Armenians to return to their historical homeland and the acquisition of political status for the Armenian Artsakh.

Thus, the RA initiative can hardly be considered as a wrong situational decision, made under duress and not in line with the country's strategic interests in the medium and long term.