

Scottish Leaders Reject Conditional Recognition of Palestinian Statehood

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Scottish National Party (SNP) and Scottish Green Party leaders have pushed back against Prime Minister Keir Starmer's recent suggestion that the United Kingdom (UK) could support Palestinian statehood at the upcoming United Nations (UN) General Assembly but only if certain conditions are met. First Minister John Swinney and Green Party co-leader Patrick Harvie have both insisted that recognition of Palestine must be unconditional and irreversible.

Prime Minister Starmer stated that the UK might support recognition of a Palestinian state in September, provided Israel agrees to a ceasefire and commits to a two-state solution. However, Swinney responded firmly, saying such recognition should not be treated as a political tool.

“Having called on the UK Government to recognise the State of Palestine, I welcome the intent behind this announcement,” said Swinney. “However, recognition must be irreversible. It must not be conditional and should be accompanied by sanctions against Israel if violence continues.”

Swinney called for an immediate ceasefire and the rapid deployment of humanitarian assistance to Gaza, where a man-made famine has taken hold. He reiterated his longstanding support for a two-state solution, stating that this remains the only credible pathway to lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

“A two-state solution is the only way that the Palestinian and Israeli peoples can have a future, living side-by-side in peace and security,” Swinney said. “The Palestinian people deserve no less.”

He also condemned the rising civilian death toll in Gaza, which has reportedly surpassed 60,000, calling it “truly horrific” and “a shame upon us all.” Swinney urged Israel to halt its military campaign, allow international investigations into potential war crimes, and release all hostages without conditions.

The Scottish Greens shared Swinney’s criticism, arguing that Starmer’s conditions effectively give Israel the power to block Palestinian sovereignty. According to Harvie, “Recognition of Palestine is decades overdue and should not be conditional.”

He described Starmer’s position as “an insult to the Palestinians’ right to self-determination,” and argued that requiring Israeli cooperation places too much leverage in the hands of a state accused of displacing and targeting Palestinian civilians. Harvie pointed to what he described as “some of the worst war crimes recorded in recent history,” many of which have been shared online and, in his words, ignored by Western powers.

“Gaza has been decimated, entire generations of families have been wiped out, and the most basic universal human rights have been stripped away,” Harvie said. He added that any

meaningful UK stance should involve immediate recognition of Palestine and a full halt to arms exports and military cooperation with Israel.

The Greens have long opposed the UK's support for Israel's military efforts, calling for an end to weapons sales and defence partnerships. They argue that delaying recognition amounts to a betrayal of Palestinians enduring mass displacement and violence.

"Recognition must be a starting point, not a final gesture," Harvie said. "Even if recognition for Palestine does come, it must be only the beginning, a moment when the international community steps in to stop the slaughter, end the occupation, and hold Israel's leaders to account at the International Criminal Court (ICC)."

As debate continues over the UK's position, pressure is mounting from Scottish parties for the government to take decisive action in recognising Palestine without waiting for Israeli agreement. Their stance reflects growing frustration with what is seen as a conditional approach to international human rights and state recognition.