

# Palestinian people must take control of their own destiny

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U.S. With their leverage as the donors who fund the salaries of PA officials, they reportedly are attempting to strike a deal that would allow Palestine to upgrade its status, but not join the International Criminal Court. While Israel would be pleased with this outcome, as it could continue to act with impunity, it would obviate one of the only potential benefits of Palestine's enhanced U.N. status.

It is clear that the Palestinian people cannot put their faith in Israel, the U.S., Europe, the Arab regimes, or even the self-proclaimed Palestinian leadership. These players must accept the consequences of creating a dangerous situation so meaningless that Palestinians now have virtually nothing left to lose.

A new reality must emerge in place of the political theater and private backroom negotiations. Nelson Mandela said "only free men can negotiate." Responsibility for achieving freedom and restoring the national, political and human rights of the Palestinians must shift squarely to the Palestinian grass roots.

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**T**HE Palestinian-Israeli conflict is again at the forefront of the news with the request to admit Palestine as a full-fledged state to the United Nations. Part of the Palestinian Authority's stated rationale is to pave the way to pursue claims against Israel at the U.N. and the International Criminal Court.

Mahmoud Abbas, de facto president of the Palestinian Authority (PA), has stated such a move would internationalize the conflict as a legal matter, not only a political one.

On the surface, these may sound like positive changes for the authority. The U.S.-backed political process has been fundamentally flawed because it lacked ground-  
 ing in international law. During this time, Israel furthered its conquest of Palestinian land and through illegal construction of Jewish-only settlements and the wall that rips through the West Bank. While Palestinians were being lured to the negotiating table purportedly to resolve the borders of a Palestinian state, Israel was deciding them on the ground.

The PA has spent much of the last decade meeting the wide-ranging demands of the U.S. It has little to show for its efforts other than U.S. threats to use its veto power to prevent U.N. admission of Palestine as well as cut off financial aid to the PA.

As morally unacceptable as the U.S. position is, it can be understood by the well-documented influence of the pro-Israel lobby, which for decades has put Israeli interests and the careers of American politicians ahead of all else, including American national international aid to the PA.