
FRANCE AND GERMANY FROWN AT TRUMP'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY

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France and Germany consider the US position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict confusing. It risks ending the prospect of a two-state solution and fueling conflict in the region, the two leading EU countries said yesterday (16 February).

France considers the US position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict confused and worrying, its foreign minister said on Thursday, reacting to US President Donald Trump's dropping of America's commitment to a two-state solution.

Trump on Wednesday dropped a US commitment to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, abandoning a major pillar of US Middle East policy.

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As between one state or two, Trump ludicrously asserts, "I like the one that both parties like. (Laughter.)" As if agreement easy! #Dems

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But on Thursday, US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said it would be wrong to say that Washington no longer supported a two-state solution.

France's Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault met US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson at a G20 meeting of foreign ministers in Bonn where, he said, he got some reassurance about Washington's stance on Russia, but little on the Middle East.

I found that there was a bit more precision (on foreign policy) even if I found that on the Israeli-Palestinian dossier it was very confused and worrying, Ayrault said of his meeting.

I wanted to remind him after the meeting between Donald Trump and (Israeli Prime Minister

Benjamin) Netanyahu that in Frances view there are no other options other than the perspective of a two-state solution and that the other option which Mr Tillerson brought up was not realistic, fair or balanced.

He did not specify what other option Tillerson had proposed. At a news conference in Washington with Netanyahu on Wednesday, Trump said, I am looking at two-state, and one-state, and I like the one that both parties like.

Germanys foreign minister yesterday also warned that building more Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories could end the prospect of a two-state solution and fuel conflict in the region.

We are concerned that unlimited construction of settlements will * make a two-state solution impossible and could increase the risks of conflicts in the Middle East, including possible war, Sigmar Gabriel told reporters, showing Berlins growing frustration about settlement activity in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Gabriel, who was also due to meet with Tillerson later on Thursday, said Germany would continue to advocate a two-state solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, calling it the only realistic option to reduce conflict in the region and prevent the emergency of a new war.

Germanys concerns about settlements have already derailed a meeting planned between the German and Israeli governments in May, with one senior German official saying ties between the two countries had been completely pared back.

German governments have made strong relations with Israel a top priority ever since World War Two, going to great lengths to make amends for the killing of six million Jews by the Nazis.

But relations have grown tense in recent years as Germany questioned Netanyahus commitment to a two-state solution with the Palestinians.

Israel cites biblical, historical and political connections to the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which it captured in the 1967 Middle East war and where some 2.6 million Palestinians live.

It has built about 120 settlements in the West Bank. About 350,000 settlers live there, with a further 200,000 in East Jerusalem.

Settlement building activity has increased sharply since Trump took office last month, with Netanyahu approving construction of 6,000 settler homes in the two areas □ moves widely condemned internationally, but not by the White House.

Kaynak/Source: