



Greece and the Israel-Hamas War

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Greece’s stance on the Israel-Hamas war reflects the excellent status of its relations with the Jewish State. The swift expression of Greek solidarity with Israel after the Hamas terrorist attack of 7 October 2023, and the organization of events to disseminate the “Bring Them Home” message, demonstrate the country’s continuing support. Greece’s attitude can be divided into two distinct phases, however. While in the first weeks of the conflict the Greek government firmly supported Israel’s right to self-defense, from the beginning of November onwards, it shifted its focus to the humanitarian dimension of hostilities. This came as a result of an adjustment in the direction of EU foreign policy and in response to domestic public opinion.

The terrorist attack of 7 October 2023 orchestrated by Hamas against Israel generated a wave of solidarity for the Jewish State in Greece. [In his tweet](#) immediately after the atrocities, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis condemned the “atrocious terrorist attack against Israel, causing a high number of casualties among civilians” and added that the Greeks “stand by the people of Israel and fully support its right to self- defense”. President Katerina Sakellaropoulou’s tweet contained similar content. The stance of SYRIZA, the main opposition party, was also supportive, if to a milder degree. [In his message](#), Stefanos Kasselakis, the new SYRIZA leader who replaced Alexis Tsipras, condemned Hamas and said he considers its actions potential war crimes. However, he expressed opposition to Israel’s “revenge logic”.

Premier Mitsotakis paid a visit to Israel on 23 October to express Greece's sympathy and solidarity with Israel to his counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu. Prior to this visit, the two leaders had met in Nicosia in early September on the occasion of the ninth trilateral summit of Greece, Israel and Cyprus. [The joint statement issued at that time](#) stressed, *inter alia*, the need to "step up the efforts to curb terrorism and hold all entities which promote and sponsor it accountable."

On October 23, while in Jerusalem, Mitsotakis reiterated Greece's position regarding the war. Although he expressed his hope for a limited humanitarian cost in Israel's military operations, he sent a clear message to Benjamin Netanyahu and to Israeli citizens: "[You can count on our support, on our help.](#)" It is worth noting that while in Israel, the Greek prime minister did not go to Ramallah to meet the president of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas. By contrast, French president Emmanuel Macron, who visited Israel a day after Mitsotakis, [did make an additional stop in the West Bank.](#)

Greece's understanding of Israeli security considerations was echoed at the UN level on 26 October. [When the General Assembly adopted a resolution calling for an "immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce" between Israeli forces and Hamas militants in Gaza](#), Greece abstained. [Fourteen other EU member states also opted to abstain](#): Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Sweden. This UN vote sparked a tense political debate in Greece. The leader of the main opposition, Stefanos Kasselakis, criticized the Greek government. In a tweet, he characterized Greece's decision to abstain as "[a day of shame for Greek diplomacy, the Greek people and their history.](#)"

For her part, President Katerina Sakellariopoulou embarked on an emotional initiative to demonstrate her support for Israel. On 7 November, she welcomed to the presidential mansion members of the families of Israeli hostages who had been abducted by Hamas. [As she said](#), the events of 7 October represent a trauma to the collective conscience of humanity and constitute some of the most serious war crimes ever committed, and the perpetrators must face the consequences. The Greek Israeli community [also organized an event at the Athens Concert Hall](#) further disseminating the "Bring Them Home" message. The event was attended by Israeli Ambassador to Greece Noam Katz.

In contrast to the month of October, November and December saw the Greek government place more emphasis on the humanitarian dimension of the Israel-Hamas war. [In an interview with Politico Magazine on 9 November](#), Prime Minister Mitsotakis said that while Israel's right to self-defense is unquestionable, "how it does so actually matters, and it matters considerably." Against this backdrop, [Greece started delivering humanitarian aid](#) to the civilian population in Gaza via Egypt. On 9 November, shortly before participating in the Paris international humanitarian conference for Gaza's civilian population, [Premier Mitsotakis met with his Palestinian counterpart Mohammad Ibrahim Shtayyeh](#). At that meeting he expressed Greece's determination to help with the creation of a humanitarian corridor and underlined the country's longstanding support for a two-state solution. A few days later, on 16 November, [Minister of Foreign Affairs George Gerapetritis went to the West Bank to talk with Palestinian officials](#).

On 12 December, the UN General Assembly adopted another resolution demanding an "immediate humanitarian ceasefire," and this time Greece [voted in favor](#). Many other EU member states that had abstained on 26 October also changed their stance, namely Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Poland and Sweden. The decision by Greece partly echoed its desire to align its policy with that of most EU member states. On 12 December the majority of member states (17) voted in favor, whereas on 26 October the majority abstained (15).

Notwithstanding the adjustment of Greece's position in the December UN vote, its overall understanding of the situation has caused it to preserve its pro-Israel position since 7 October. It is indicative that when a building adjacent to the St. Porphyrius Monastery in Gaza was hit during the hostilities, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued [a neutral statement](#) calling for the protection of civilians and the security of places of worship and religious institutions.

On the whole, Greek public opinion has endorsed the government's policy on the Israel-Hamas war, according to a survey conducted in December. [This poll](#) showed that 43.4% of respondents evaluated this policy positively and 41.9% negatively. Most respondents (43.1%) held a negative view on the stance of the opposition, while a lower percentage (35.1%) had a positive opinion. Also, 47.4% said they consider Hamas a terrorist organization, with 17% calling it a resistance group. More respondents (30.9%) believe the Palestinians to be "right" on the

Palestinian question than the Israelis (17.3%) – a typical tendency in Greek society, which has deep historical roots.

In tandem with its alignment with EU policy, the Greek government is also responding to domestic public opinion trends. A [survey that was conducted at the beginning of November, days after the first UN vote](#), showed that a majority of citizens (46.3%) did not favor the government's position while 34.8% were in accord. The Greek government is likely to continue to showcase its solidarity with Israel without ignoring the suffering of Gazans.

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