

Israel to Open Permanent Mission at NATO Headquarters

By [RT News](#)

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Israel will accept the invitation to open a permanent mission at the bloc's headquarters in Brussels, Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli PM has said. The move became possible after Turkey reportedly lifted its veto on Jerusalem's cooperation with the bloc.

"I declare that Israel will accept the invitation and open an office in the near future," Netanyahu said during a Cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

The reasons for NATO's interest in cooperation include Israel's "determined fight against terror, our technological know-how, our intelligence network and other things," Netanyahu said.

Upgrading ties with the 28-member NATO block was "something we worked on for many years," he added.

Netanyahu also confirmed that the decision to allow Israel to open a permanent mission at NATO HQ was made after Turkey, a member of the alliance since 1952, lifted its veto on Israeli activity within the bloc, Israeli media reported Wednesday.

Unanimous consent of all NATO members is required for collaborating with unaffiliated countries, such as Israel.

Israel views the decision to lift the veto as another sign of Ankara's desire to normalize relations with Jerusalem, a senior Israeli source told Haaretz.

Israel's Ambassador to the EU, David Walzer, will be heading the country's permanent mission in Brussels, Foreign Ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon told The Times of Israel.

Previously, NATO issued a statement, saying that "the North Atlantic Council has agreed to accept the request that an official Israeli Mission be established at NATO headquarters."

"Israel is a very active partner of the Alliance as a member of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue, established in December 1994," the statement said.

It was pressure by other NATO members on Turkey that allowed for the invitation of Israel, Tommy Steiner, from the Institute for Policy and Strategy near Tel-Aviv, told AFP.

"Since the introduction of the new [NATO] partnership policy in 2014 Israel was formally invited. But Israel never did that because there was a Turkish veto on such a measure," he

said.

According to the NATO-Israeli relations expert, it is *“not on the cards”* for Israel to become a full member of NATO.

Turkey cut ties with former ally, Israel, and imposed veto on its cooperation with NATO after the Mavi Marmara incident in 2010, when Israeli special forces killed 10 Turkish activists aboard a vessel that tried to breach the naval blockade on Gaza.

After years of mutual accusations, Ankara and Jerusalem held two rounds of secret talks in December and February. Another round of negotiations is expected to take place in mid-May, with the sides expected to settle most of their disputes. Israel even agreed to scale back on the blockade of Palestine’s Gaza Strip, allowing Turkey to build power and desalination plants in the area.

The main unresolved issue is the Turkish offices of Hamas, which Israel views as a terrorist organization, according to Haaretz. Last week, both Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said that reconciliation with Jerusalem was near.

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