



# French FM Kouchner says he 'can envision' Palestinian state

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French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner has said he could envision the recognition of a Palestinian state even before its borders are drawn up, as demonstrators protested the fifth anniversary of Israel's separation barrier.

**AFP** - France's Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said he could envision the recognition of a Palestinian state even before its borders are drawn up, in a French newspaper interview to appear Saturday.

"The issue before us at the moment is the building of a reality: France is training Palestinian police, businesses are being created in the West Bank... It follows that one can envision the proclamation soon of a Palestinian state, and its immediate recognition by the international community, even before negotiating its borders," Kouchner told the Journal du Dimanche.

Kouchner's comments come ahead of a visit to Paris by Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas next week, and after Palestinian prime minister Salam Fayyad said he could see an independent Palestinian state in 2011 regardless of whether peace talks have advanced with Israel.

"If by mid-2011, the political process has not ended the (Israeli) occupation, I would bet that the developed state of Palestinian infrastructure and institutions will be such that the pressure will force Israel to give up its occupation," he said in an interview published in French media on Friday.

Abbas is due to meet with Kouchner in Paris on February 21 and with President Nicolas Sarkozy the following day, a senior Palestinian official said this week on condition of anonymity.

Abbas has agreed in principle to a US proposal that he hold indirect talks with Israel under Washington's mediation, but has requested a number of guarantees.

The Palestinians had broken off peace talks after Israel launched a devastating assault on the Gaza Strip in December 2008.

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