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Barak warns 'tsunami' of sanctions awaits Israel

Cites lack of action on Palestinian peace

By Abraham Rabinovich

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JERUSALEM | Israel faces a "diplomatic tsunami" that could erode its international support and bolster its enemies in the Middle East, the Jewish state's defense minister said this week.

Ehud Barak also criticized his coalition government partner, Benjamin Netanyahu, saying indecisiveness by the prime minister "was pushing Israel into a corner from which the old South Africa's deterioration began."

More than 110 countries have announced their recognition of a Palestinian state. The Palestinian Authority hopes that number will be 150 by September, when it plans to request formal recognition from the United Nations.

"We face a diplomatic tsunami that the majority of the public is unaware of," Mr. Barak said during a speech at the [Institute for National Security Studies](#). "Israel's delegitimization is in sight."

International recognition of a Palestinian state will have little practical impact as long as the Palestinians and Israelis have not negotiated a peace agreement.

But Mr. Barak's reference to South Africa indicates his concern that Israel could be subjected to international sanctions aimed at forcing the Jewish state to make concessions to the Palestinians.

International sanctions against South Africa in the late 20th century prodded it to rescind its apartheid policies, which had maintained whites' domination of the black-majority population.

Mr. Netanyahu, head of the right-wing Likud party, has blamed the lack of progress in peace negotiations on the Palestinians, who have refused to talk unless Israel freezes

construction in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, where Palestinians intend to establish their state.

However, Mr. Barak, leader of the recently founded Independence party, blamed Mr. Netanyahu, with whom he has worked for the past two years.

In his speech, the defense minister made it clear that he was referring to Mr. Netanyahu when he spoke of "inaction, paralysis" in Israel's attempts to reach a peace deal with Palestinians.

"We haven't tried to put the core issues on the table. Israel must say it is willing to discuss security borders, refugees and Jerusalem, and then it could have a chance," Mr. Barak said.

Under intense U.S. pressure two years ago, Mr. Netanyahu announced his readiness to accept a Palestinian state alongside Israel — the first time an Israeli prime minister has made such a statement.

Since then, however, Mr. Netanyahu has not engaged in a serious dialogue with the Palestinians.

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