

Egypt, Jordan Will Only Symbolically Condemn Israel

by Hugh Fitzgerald



President Abdel Fatah el-Sisi and Jordanian King Abdullah

There are those who keep warning the Israelis not to declare their sovereignty in parts of Judea and Samaria (the “West Bank”), lest all hell break loose in the Arab states. There are others who claim that very little will in fact happen: a pro-forma denunciation from Arab states, but no breaking of peace treaties, and no ending of security cooperation with the Jewish state.

All the signs suggest that the latter scenario – with some sound, but not much fury – is more likely. The report-at Israel Hayom is [here](#).

Although it still wasn't clear whether Israel will declare sovereignty in parts of Judea and Samaria on July 1, talks between Israel and moderate Sunni countries were continuing

in earnest behind the scenes.

Senior Arab diplomatic officials, along with senior defense and intelligence officials in Egypt and Jordan, confirmed to Israel Hayom on Monday [June 22] that over the past several weeks – ahead of the planned implementation of Israeli sovereignty in Judea and Samaria and Jordan Valley – intensive diplomatic activity was taking place between Israel and moderate Arab countries. The purpose of these diplomatic efforts was to reach an agreement on the nature and scope of the response from Sunni Arab countries, chief among them Egypt and Jordan, which have peace treaties with Israel – if and when Israel applies sovereignty.

According to those Arab officials, senior intelligence and defense officials were engaging in the talks under a heavy veil of secrecy.

One senior Arab diplomat said Mossad chief Yossi Cohen and the head of Egypt's General Intelligence Service Abbas Kamal were spearheading the talks, and that in recent meetings agreed that Israel would implement its sovereignty plan while Arab countries would voice their formal objections to the initiative – without significantly damaging diplomatic relations between the countries.

A senior Egyptian official told Israel Hayom this week that Palestinian concerns about the nature of Cairo's response to Israel's sovereignty bid were justified because Cohen and Kamal have already agreed in principle over the scope and tone of Egypt's response. Egyptian defense officials have even been able to persuade their Jordanian counterparts to recommend to Jordanian King Abdullah II to suffice with declarative condemnation of the Israeli initiative and eschew operative steps that would harm the peace accord with Israel...

This report has the distinct ring of truth. Egypt benefits too

much from its security cooperation with Israel to want to do more than issue a pro-forma denunciation of any Israeli extension of sovereignty in the West Bank. Now that Israel has proven to be such a valuable ally for Egypt in its battles against the Muslim Brotherhood, including its Gazan branch Hamas, and against the Islamic State fighters (who remain murderously active in the Sinai, where in just one attack – among so many they have carried out – they killed 305 mosque worshippers), Egypt has no desire to end that cooperation. Furthermore, Egypt worries about the encroachments of Shi'a Iran on Sunni Arab peoples, through proxies and allies in Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, and realizes that Israel remains Iran's most effective and implacable enemy.

At the same time that Israel has proven its worth as an ally of Egypt, the Palestinian Arabs are increasingly seen in a far less favorable light by Cairo. The Egyptians have grown increasingly impatient with the Palestinians. They feel they have done quite enough for them, having fought three wars with Israel on their behalf, costing Egypt a great deal in men, money, and materiel (including having almost its entire air force wiped out in June 1967), without any discernible display of gratitude from the Palestinians.

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Jordan, like Egypt, benefits from Israeli security cooperation against the Muslim Brotherhood and other groups inside Jordan that are opposed to the monarchy, and against the threat of

Iranian intelligence groups in Jordan that King Abdullah has been warning about since 2004. Jordan will coordinate with, and follow the lead of, Egypt, in its response to any extension by Israel of sovereignty in the West Bank. The King will formally protest, but as the article in Israel Hayom makes clear, he will do no more.

But the Egyptians have gone further and helped fashion Jordan's formal response as well. Defense officials in Cairo have, according to the report of an unnamed "senior Egyptian official," persuaded Jordanian security officers to recommend to King Abdullah that he should follow Egypt's lead. That is, he, too, should issue a pro-forma condemnation of Israel's extension of sovereignty, but not actually do anything that could damage the peace treaty with Israel.

The latest move by the Palestinians is to try to involve Turkey in the campaign to prevent, or punish, Israel for any extension of its sovereignty in the West Bank. Mahmoud Abbas has appealed to President Erdogan to "spearhead" an opposition to the Israeli sovereignty plans. How exactly that would work is unclear, given the Arabs' historic memory of mistreatment by the Ottoman Turks. Just how unpopular Erdogan is among the Arabs became clear in 2018, when he proposed that a pan-Islamic army be raised – headed by Turkey – to defeat Israel, and not a single Arab state bothered to respond.

This appeal by Abbas to Turkey to head an Arab opposition has enraged the Egyptians, not only because it plays to Erdogan's neo-Ottoman fantasies, of being the natural leader of the Muslims, but because right now Egypt and Turkey are at war in Libya through proxies, with Egypt backing the Libyan National Army of General Haftar, and Turkey backing the Government of National Accord (GNA) headed by Fawaz al-Sarraj. That conflict could become a direct war if Turkish forces were to cross the "red lines" at Sirte that General El-Sisi has warned Turkey about. Jordan, too, regards Erdogan's plans to project Turkish strength in North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean with

deep misgivings. The Palestinians, by appealing to Erdogan, have only reinforced the desire in Cairo and Amman to let Mahmoud Abbas and his fellows fend for themselves, and have done with the Palestinian imbroglio that for Egypt and Jordan has brought nothing but trouble. For Egypt, Turkey has become, with its interference in Libya, its main immediate worry. And in Libya, as in the Sinai, Israel has been Egypt's valuable ally, supplying Haftar's forces with military supplies.

In a very short time we will learn about Israel's carefully crafted extension of sovereignty to part of the West Bank, followed by the pro-forma denunciations, but nothing more, from Cairo, Amman, Riyadh, Dubai, and Manama, and possibly from many other Arab capitals – taking their lead from Cairo – as well. But no peace treaties will be torn up, no Arab armies will be marching on Jerusalem, and once again, the Saudi Crown Prince, now quietly supported by General El-Sisi and King Abdullah – will deliver the message to Mahmoud Abbas that he least wants to hear. To wit: "Take whatever deal you are offered. The train has left the station. Run faster. Try to get on board."

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