

Palestinians Enraged Over UAE Peace with Israel

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Naturally, the news that the UAE has recognized Israel and will engage in “normalization” with the Jewish state has enraged the Palestinians. They do not want any Arab country to act to further its own interests in dealing with Israel; it is the Palestinians who must call the shots. The latest on Palestinian rage over the “betrayal” by the UAE is [here](#).

Israel talked of “history” and Palestinians of “betrayal” after Thursday’s surprise announcement of a deal to normalize relations between the Jewish state and the United Arab Emirates.

In a nationwide televised address, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the deal would lead to “full and formal peace” with the Gulf Arab state and voiced hope that other countries in the region would follow the UAE’s example.

There are already signs that two other Gulf Arab states, Oman and Bahrain, both of which have praised the UAE's move to "normalize" relations with Israel, will soon do the same. And not a single Arab state has denounced the UAE's move. The only countries in the Middle East that are in a rage over the announcement are those two non-Arab states, Turkey and Iran.

Netanyahu said it also entailed acceding to a request from US President Donald Trump to "temporarily wait" on implementing the Israeli leader's pledge to annex parts of the West Bank.

"It's an incomparably exciting moment, a historic moment for peace in the Middle East," Netanyahu said.

It's still unclear from what has been released if the UAE's move depends on Israel permanently agreeing not to "annex" (i.e, extend Israeli sovereignty) over part, or all, of the West Bank, or if the UAE leaders only want Israel to hold off for now, until the full benefits of its agreement to normalize relations with Israel become clear to its people. Clearly Prime Minister Netanyahu himself believes that according to the deal Israel need only "temporarily" delay – the word used was "suspension" – in implementing his pledge to extend sovereignty to parts of the West Bank. The UAE already benefits from its cooperation with Israel on intelligence about Iran. Now it will be cooperating with Israel in technology, education, tourism, defense, and efforts to contain the coronavirus, and as the value of that cooperation becomes ever more obvious, the UAE is likely to drop its implied threat to halt "normalization" if Israel annexes part of the West Bank.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, whose officials seemed to be taken by surprise, issued an unusually strong condemnation of a regional Arab neighbor and instructed the Palestinian ambassador to the UAE to return immediately.

Will the UAE at this point care what the Palestinians think or do? The Gulf Arabs have become increasingly tired of Palestinian behavior. As early as 2017, Mahmoud Abbas was told by the Saudis to “accept whatever plan the Americans were preparing or quit.” After the Trump Deal of the Century was announced, the Saudis continued to express that view. The Saudi Crown Prince expressed what many in the Gulf feel when he exasperatedly told Mahmoud Abbas, yet again, to “accept whatever dealt the Americans offered.” So far on social media Emiratis have overwhelmingly approved of the UAE’s decision to make peace, and normalize relations, with Israel. They have noted the many expected benefits from this, and asked, rhetorically, what had the Palestinians ever done for the UAE.

The Palestinian leadership rejects and denounces the UAE, Israeli and US trilateral, surprising, announcement,” said Abbas’s spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Reading a statement on Palestinian television, Abu Rudeineh said the leadership regarded the UAE’s move as “a betrayal.”

The statement urged the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to assemble to “reject” the deal, adding “neither the UAE nor any other party has the right to speak in the name of the Palestinian people.”...

It is unlikely that either the Arab League or the O.I.C will meet as the PA demands. Egypt, Oman, and Bahrain have already spoken favorably of the UAE’s move. Saudi Arabia is still silent, but the Saudi Crown Prince, Mohammad bin Salman, is known to favor closer ties with Israel, especially in dealing with the Iranian threat. And the UAE is the closest ally of Saudi Arabia; the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, is a good friend of the Saudi Crown Prince. The silence, in this case, signifies approval.

The Palestinian spokesman Abu Rudeineh has things backwards.

It is not the UAE that presumes to “speak in the name of the Palestinian people,” but the Palestinians who presume to dictate to the other Arabs, including the Emiratis, what they can and cannot do to further their own interests through closer ties to Israel. The UAE was not “speaking in the name of the Palestinian people,” as Abu Rudeineh claimed, but in its own name, for policies intended to benefit its own people.

Meanwhile, right now many of the Jews in the West Bank “settlements” (really, cities and towns) feel betrayed, because they assume that Israel has committed itself to permanently refrain from any further extension of sovereignty in the West Bank. That does not appear to be Prime Minister Netanyahu’s understanding of the deal made with the UAE; he talks only of a temporary halt to annexation. It’s unclear if the UAE’s continued adherence to the deal is dependent on a permanent halt to any annexation by Israel, or if this is still a matter for further discussion, as Netanyahu seems to think. The Emiratis themselves may not yet realize the full value of the benefits they will derive from this normalization with Israel. The UAE has a good idea of what Israeli cooperation on intelligence matters about Iran have meant, but what will Israeli cooperation on investment, technology, tourism, agriculture, water management, security, telecommunications, defense, and other matters mean for the UAE? Will those benefits be enough to make the UAE decide to keep honoring the agreement even if Israel does extend its sovereignty to some part of the West Bank? Many in Israel must hope so. And in the UAE, the initial enthusiasm for this decision, and the increasing anger expressed by Emiratis at the Palestinian critics of the move, suggest that the Israeli optimism is warranted.

Hanan Ashrawi, a veteran Palestinian negotiator, told Reuters: “We were blindsided. Their secret dealings are now completely out in the open. It is a complete sell-out.”...

Hanan Ashrawi, like her boss Mahmoud Abbas, seems to think the UAE, and all the Arab states, have no right to further their own interests. When it comes to relations with Israel, they must do exactly as the Palestinians insist, even if it means foregoing useful cooperation with the Jewish state in a half-dozen different fields. Clearly, the UAE's indifference to what the Palestinians demand, its daring to going ahead without "consulting" Ramallah – whatchutzpah from Ashrawi! – has enraged the Palestinians who are now anxious about their "abandonment" by their Arab brothers. In truth, it's not "abandonment," but a simple calculation: Israel offers good value, in so many different fields, for the UAE, while the Palestinians offer nothing but a litany of complaints, with their hands perennially outstretched in "alms-for-the-poor" mode. How dare the Palestinians, forever complaining, presume to read the U.A.E. the riot act, telling this rich and powerful country what policies toward Israel it "must" adopt?

There was no official reaction or media coverage in Saudi Arabia, but some Saudis tweeted under hashtags "normalization is treason", "UAE" and "Israel."

But many more Saudis on social media have supported, than denounced, the UAE's intention to "normalize" relations with Israel. Some noted that Iran – Saudi Arabia's mortal enemy – had raged against the agreement, which only makes Saudis more likely to support it. Others also noted that Turkey's Erdogan had also fumed, and recalled his ambassador to the UAE. Turkey is also perceived in Saudi Arabia as an enemy. It was Erdogan who made much of the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, to the Crown Prince's great anger. It is the Turks who support the Muslim Brotherhood, regarded by the Saudis as a threat to their family's rule. And it is the Turks who have been conducting aggressive outreach among Palestinians in East Jerusalem, providing financial support for local Arab groups, and free trips for Palestinians to Istanbul, in a move the Saudis and Jordanians fear is an attempt by Erdogan to push for a Turkish

role in the Waqf that administers Haram al-Sharif, and that until now has been exclusively under Jordanian control.

Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, the head of Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi group's Supreme Revolutionary Committee, said the deal was a betrayal of the Palestinian cause and of pan-Arabism.

When the Houthis attack the UAE's normalizing of relations with Israel, that only serves to increase Saudi support for the policy. The Houthis, backed by Iran, are the enemy the Saudis have been fighting for years in Yemen, and whatever they are against the Saudis will naturally support.

The next domino to fall is likely to be Bahrain, which has already expressed its approval of the UAE's policy. And after that, Oman – whose late ruler Sultan Qaboos memorably hosted Prime Minister Netanyahu – which also praised the UAE-Israel normalization. And rumors have swirled since last February about Morocco preparing for normalization of relations with Israel, partly in response to Israeli efforts in Washington to have the U.S. recognize Moroccan sovereignty over the disputed Western Sahara.

What the UAE normalization shows is that the sky does not fall on those who dare to “normalize” relations with Israel. The Palestinians may rant, but no Arab state has supported them, and three states – Oman, Bahrain, and Egypt – have praised the UAE's move. Instead there is widespread anger at the Palestinians for presuming to dictate the policies of sovereign Arab states which have become tired of Palestinian attempts to direct their policies, and thereby to deny them the possible benefits, in trade, technology, tourism, agriculture, and defense that relations with Israel could provide. In the Middle East, only Iran and Turkey, in their fanatical hatred of the Jewish state, support the Palestinians in their campaign against the UAE.

So who will be next to normalize relations with the Jewish

state? Bahrain? Oman? Morocco? Could it even be Saudi Arabia, ready to follow the lead of its ally the UAE? Israel has so much to offer these countries, as they have begun to realize, while the Palestinians, on the other hand, have nothing to offer, and only make demands. The dogs bark in Ramallah, but the caravan that started in the Emirates moves on.

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