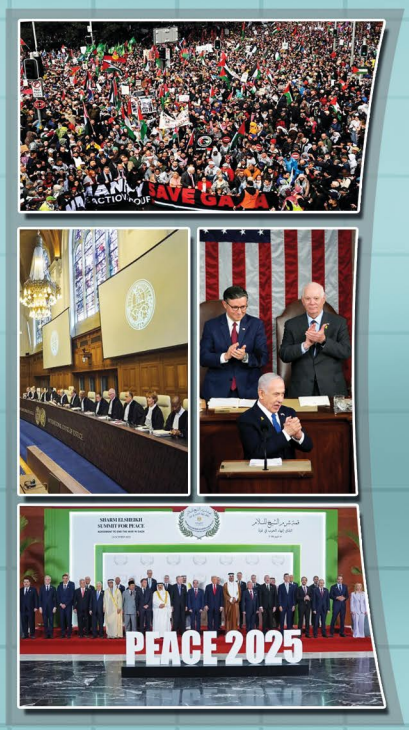
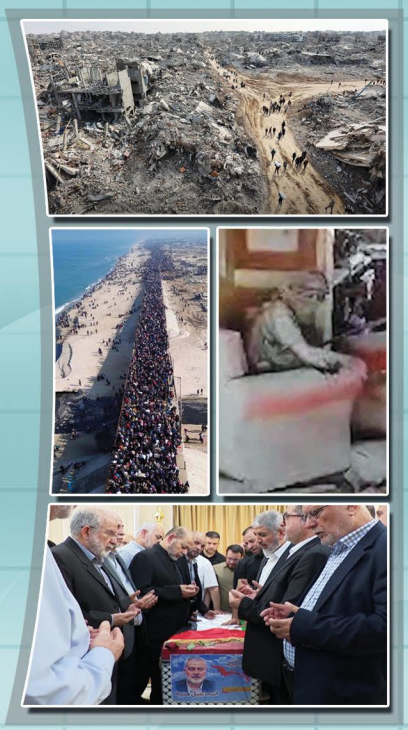
The Palestine Strategic Report 2024 – 2025





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Al-Zaytouna Centre For Studies & Consultations

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Strategic Report
2024 – 2025

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Chapter Six

The Palestine Issue and the Arab World

The Palestine Issue and the Arab World*

Introduction

The official Arab response to Israel's aggression in the GS following Operation al-Aqsa Flood on 7/10/2023, continuing through 2024–2025, was largely weak. Arab countries refrained from halting Israel's attacks, continued supplying it with essential resources, and actively helped shield it from aerial strikes.[1] While some Arab governments expressed rhetorical support for the Palestine issue, this rarely translated into concrete action.[2] Pro-resistance public in Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq supported Gaza in confronting Israeli aggression, while a broader regional war was avoided.[3] As for the Arab public response, it remained limited; the Arab street lacked the momentum seen in earlier confrontations with Israel, amid an official climate that curtailed engagement and lowered levels of mobilization, despite this war in GS being the deadliest and most comprehensive in the conflict's history.[4]

This chapter analyzes Arab positions on the Palestine issue, reviews the stances of the League of Arab States (LAS), and focuses on the frontline states: Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. It also considers the broader perspectives of other Arab countries, alongside public opinion across the Arab world.

First: LAS Positions and the Arab Summit

1. Position on the Peace Process for the Palestine Issue and the Resistance Project

Over the five LAS summits held during the two years covered by this report, ordinary sessions, including the 33rd Summit in Bahrain on 16/5/2024 and the 34th Summit in Baghdad on 17/5/2025, as well as the Joint Arab Islamic Extraordinary Summits with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Riyadh on 11/11/2024, Cairo on 4/3/2025 and Doha on 15/9/2025, the LAS consistently

* This chapter was written by Sameh Singer, except for the section on Egypt, authored by Fatima Hassan 'Itani, a researcher at Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations.

reaffirmed its call for a just and comprehensive peaceful resolution of the Palestine issue, encompassing the Palestinian people's legitimate aspiration for a contiguous state in GS and WB, along the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.[5] Furthermore, the leaders of LAS and OIC called "on the Security Council to follow up on the international consensus expressed in the UNGA Resolution dated May 10, 2024 that the State of Palestine is qualified for full membership in the United Nations, calling to issue a resolution granting the State of Palestine full membership in the United Nations, and to urge Member States to mobilize the necessary support to adopt the resolution."[6]

Regarding Israeli aggression against GS following Operation al-Aqsa Flood on 7/10/2023, LAS, in summit statements issued during 2024–2025, condemned the ongoing Israeli aggression and genocide against the Palestinian people, including the imposition of starvation and a lethal siege, and the systematic destruction of infrastructure across GS.[7] Moreover, it denounced Israel's refusal to comply with UNSC Resolution 2728 (2024), which, inter alia, demanded "an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan," as well as UNSC Resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023), which demanded, inter alia, the immediate, safe, and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid throughout GS. It further criticized Israel's failure to implement the ICJ provisional measures on 26/1/2024 and 28/3/2024, requiring Israel to halt the killing of Palestinian civilians and its facilitation of humanitarian and medical assistance across GS.[8]

The Arab League advanced a set of demands to halt Israeli violations against Palestinians, foremost ending Israeli aggression against GS. It called on the UNSC to adopt a Chapter VII resolution under the UN Charter compelling Israel to comply with a ceasefire, and to permit the entry of humanitarian aid.[9] In effect, LAS appeared to concede that only the UNSC could compel Israel to halt the war in GS, thereby shifting responsibility away from itself while overlooking the near-impossibility of securing such a resolution given the US veto. The LAS also "urged ICJ to expedite its ruling on the genocide lawsuit against Israel," and demanded breaking the Israeli blockade on GS, and enforcing the entry of humanitarian aid convoys.[10] Moreover, it called on states supplying arms to Israel to cease doing so, and urged countries whose citizens serve in the Israeli army and participate in crimes against the Palestinian people to pursue legal accountability and prevent further involvement.[11] LAS further called on Arab states to review

their diplomatic and economic relations with Israel;[12] however, none acted on this recommendation.

Following repeated calls by US President Donald Trump to relocate Palestinians from GS to Egypt and Jordan,[13] Arab parliamentary leaders adopted on 22/2/2025 an "Arab Parliamentary Document" supporting Palestinian steadfastness, rejecting displacement and annexation, and opposing efforts to eradicate the Palestine issue.[14] On 4/3/2025, the extraordinary Arab League Summit in Cairo endorsed Egypt's early recovery and reconstruction plan for GS as a unified Arab initiative,[15] focusing on rebuilding without displacing Palestinians.[16]

LAS welcomed the "peace" plan to end the war in GS, announced by US President Donald Trump on 29/9/2025, and signed at the Sharm El-Sheikh "Peace Summit" in October 2025, under Egyptian-US sponsorship with Qatari and Turkish participation. The UNSC endorsed it in Resolution 2803 (November 2025). The plan was seen "as starting point towards stopping bloodshed, ensuring unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid, withdrawal of the Israeli forces," and advance a two-state solution,[17] including provisions against Palestinian displacement and annexation of the WB. However, LAS expressed reservations, as noted by Assistant Secretary-General Hossam Zaki in a televised interview on 7/10/2025. His concerns centered on the scope and timeline of Israeli withdrawals and the involvement of certain international figures Zaki firmly rejected the notion of foreign actors, such as Tony Blair, managing affairs in GS, insisting that "Palestinians must govern themselves, not have rulers imported for them." He further underscored that "the vacuum left by the Israeli withdrawal requires empowering the Palestinian National Authority to assume its responsibilities."[18]

2. The Position on Normalization

The Arab League has consistently reaffirmed, in all its resolutions and statements, its full commitment to the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, viewing it as the unified Arab position and the foundation for any efforts to revive peace in the Middle East. The initiative establishes that the precondition for peace with Israel and the normalization of relations is Israel's complete withdrawal from all Palestinian and Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, the Shebaa Farms, the Kfar Shuba Hills, and the occupied lands of the Lebanese town of Al-Mari. It also calls for the establishment of a fully sovereign Palestinian state along the 4/6/1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the restoration

of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including self-determination, the right of return, compensation for refugees, and a just resolution of their issue in line with UNGA Resolution 194 (1948).[19] Notably, the LAS's resolutions do not specify the measures that could be taken if an Arab state violates this consensus through normalization with Israel; for example, they do not address the possibility of suspending or revoking the membership of the state in question.

In this context, LAS Secretary-General Ahmad Abu al-Ghait, in a 29/5/2025 interview with *El País*, explained why Arab states with diplomatic ties to Israel had not severed them: "Severing relations is not a prudent policy when it comes to negotiating with the parties: Egypt and also Qatar [which does not officially recognize Israel] are trying to mediate to achieve a ceasefire in Gaza, which requires communicating with both sides, including Israel [the other being Hamas]. If there are no diplomatic relations or communication, it would be impossible to get anything from Israel."[20]

3. Internal Conflict and Reconciliation

In its resolutions and statements, LAS consistently reaffirmed support for President Mahmud 'Abbas's vision of national unity, grounded in commitment to the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, its political program and its international obligations. This vision is based on the principles of "one state, one law, and one legitimate security force," while affirming "that Gaza is an integral part of the State of Palestine, and that we are ready to assume full responsibility for governance and security there," within the political and geographic unity of the 1967 occupied Palestinian territories.[21]

Furthermore, LAS reaffirmed its support for Egypt's ongoing efforts "to achieve Palestinian unity at this critical stage, and enabling the Palestinian government to carry out its responsibilities and duties towards the Palestinian people, including through forming various mechanisms and agencies and agreeing on a community support committee to be formed by a decree issued by the President of the State of Palestine."[22]

Furthermore, LAS welcomed "the Palestinian decision to establish a Gaza Administration Committee under the umbrella of the Palestinian government —comprising qualified individuals from the Strip for a transitional period— alongside efforts to empower the Palestinian National Authority to return to Gaza as a manifestation of the political and geographical unity of the Palestinian

territories occupied in 1967." LAS also expressed "appreciation for the initiative put forth by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Arab Republic of Egypt to train and qualify Palestinian police forces to ensure their full preparedness in maintaining security throughout the GS.[23]

4. The Position on WB and Jerusalem

The Arab League called on "the international community to fully implement the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice dated July 19, 2024 towards ending the Israeli occupation, removing its effects, and paying compensation for its damages, as soon as possible." It also welcomed the UNGA resolution of 18/9/2024 adopting "the outcomes of the legal advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the illegality of the Israeli occupation," and urged the UNSC and the wider "international to take the necessary decisions, including imposing sanctions, in order to stop the escalating illegal Israeli measures in the occupied West Bank that undermine the two-state solution."[24] In this context, LAS condemned the Israeli Knesset's approval, on 22/10/2025, "of Israeli Knesset of two draft laws aiming to impose a so called 'Israeli sovereignty' over the occupied West Bank, and on Israeli illegal colonial settlements as a blatant violation of international law, and of United Nations Security Council resolutions…. in addition to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice."[25]

It also strongly condemned "the terrorist acts committed by Israeli settlers against Palestinian citizens and their property, which are escalating in an organized manner with the support and armament of the government and the protection of its forces." Furthermore, it called for "holding settlers accountable for the crimes they are committing against the Palestinian people and their property," "classifying Israeli settlers and Jewish settler movements as terrorist groups and organizations," and "boycotting products of Israeli settlements on the occupied Palestinian territory."[26]

LAS reaffirmed that East Jerusalem is the capital of the State of Palestine and condemned Israeli "attempts aimed at changing the legal and historical status quo in the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, dividing it temporally and spatially." It further denounced escalating Israeli measures in Jerusalem, such as civilian killings, home demolitions, forced displacement, and an unprecedented expansion of settlement projects. In response, LAS called for several measures, notably the adoption of a UNESCO decision affirming that *al-Aqsa* Mosque and al-Haram al-Sharif are

synonymous designations for a single site; confirming that "the entire 144,000 m2 area of the blessed Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram alSharif is a place of worship for Muslims only"; and reiterating that "the Department of Jerusalem Waqf and Blessed Aqsa Mosque Affairs of Jordan is the sole legitimate body that is competent to manage and maintain the blessed Aqsa Mosque and regulate entry thereinto," and that Israel has no authority to restrict Muslims from performing their religious duties there.[27]

LAS rejected any unilateral measures that would undermine Jerusalem's legal status, including the establishment of diplomatic offices or missions in the city; this encompassed the earlier US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the relocation of its embassy there, as well as decisions by Honduras, Kosovo and the Czech Republic to open diplomatic missions in the city. Moreover, it called on the international community to pressure Israel not to obstruct Palestinian general elections in East Jerusalem. It further urged Arab and Muslim countries, organizations, and funds along with civil society groups, to provide the necessary support and financing to safeguard the holy city and bolster the resilience of its residents and institutions against Israeli policies aimed at Judaizing the city and displacing its inhabitants.[28]

Second: The Positions and Roles of Some Key Countries

1. Egypt

a. Egypt's Relations with the Palestinian Parties

Throughout the war on GS and its aftermath, Egypt's engagement with the Palestinian parties was guided by a dual objective: upholding the official Palestinian legitimacy while maintaining functional channels of communication with key actors on the ground. This approach forms part of a broader Egyptian effort to reorganize the Palestinian political system in anticipation of the post-war phase. Accordingly, Cairo consistently affirmed that the PA is the sole legitimate authority entrusted with administering the Palestinian territories. It further tied any future arrangements in the GS to the PA's return to the Strip and the reunification of the WB and the GS under a unified political and security framework. Simultaneously, Egypt underscored the principle that arms must be monopolized by the official

Palestinian security institutions, rejecting any governing role for Hamas or other factions in the GS and calling for all armed groups to surrender their weapons to the legitimate authority.[29]

Egypt further reinforced its position as a principal sponsor of intra-Palestinian dialogue by hosting several rounds of talks in 2024–2025 between Fatah, Hamas, and the PLO. These discussions aimed to address the Palestinian schism ongoing since 2007 and to advance efforts at putting the Palestinian political house in order. In this regard, Cairo supported the establishment of transitional committees to oversee border crossings, relief, and public services, while also promoting the forming of a community support committee to mitigate the humanitarian crisis in the GS.[30]

Cairo convened several rounds of negotiations between Fatah and Hamas in late 2024. On 4/12/2024, the two movements reached agreement on a draft framework to establish a "Community Support Committee" to administer the GS in coordination with the PA government, based on an Egyptian proposal. However, Fatah withdrew its endorsement just four days later. The following month, a delegation from the PLO and Fatah formally communicated to Egypt their rejection of this framework, as well as any alternative arrangement that would involve Hamas in governance.[31]

Moreover, in October 2025, Cairo received senior Palestinian delegations, including one led by Vice President Hussein al-Sheikh, within the framework of political and security coordination for the forthcoming phase and the consolidation of Palestinian unity.[32] Subsequently, on 10/2/2026, Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr ʻAbdelatty met in Cairo with PNC Speaker Rawhi Fattouh and PLO Secretary ʻAzzam al-Ahmad. ʻAbdelatty reaffirmed ongoing consultation concerning developments in the GS and WB, as well as Egypt's commitment to preventing renewed escalation and ensuring the uninterrupted delivery of humanitarian assistance, thereby underscoring its sustained and direct engagement with PLO institutions.[33]

Within the practical preparations for the "day after," Egypt announced the initiation of training programs for thousands of Palestinian police officers in Egyptian facilities, in coordination with Jordan, with a view to their eventual deployment in the GS to fill the existing security vacuum. This initiative underscores

Cairo's broader strategy of rebuilding the Strip's security infrastructure under the authority of the PA.[34]

In parallel, Cairo's position toward Hamas has reflected a calibrated pragmatic duality. On the one hand, official statements issued on 17/2/2024 advanced a critical assessment that situated the movement outside the bounds of "official Palestinian legitimacy." They further called for accountability for those actors that had enabled Hamas financially and politically in the GS, contending that such support had significantly deepened the Palestinian schism. At the same time, Egypt has continued to preserve channels of communication with Hamas, in recognition of its de facto authority in the GS and the practical necessities of mediation in de-escalation efforts and prisoner exchanges.[35]

b. Egypt's Approach to the GS War: Mediation and Post-War Arrangements

During 2024–2025, Egypt's efforts to end the war on the GS followed a multi-layered trajectory that combined diplomatic mediation, regional and international political engagement, and legal action before international bodies. Through this approach, Cairo sought to consolidate a ceasefire, prevent further regional escalation, and reintegrate the political track into the management of the conflict. Following the collapse of the initial truce agreement on 30/11/2023, Egypt, together with Qatar and the US, entered into an intensive negotiation process. This track comprised the first and second Paris meetings, held in January 2024 and February 2024, respectively, with the objective of formulating a framework for a prisoner exchange, ending the war, securing Israel's withdrawal from GS, enabling the return of displaced persons and initiating reconstruction. Nevertheless, the first meeting failed to produce a final agreement due to fundamental divergences between the parties. By contrast, the second meeting yielded preliminary consensus on a general framework for a prisoner exchange and introduced a phased de-escalation plan for the GS. Ultimately, the negotiations concluded on the basis of what became known as the "Paris Principles Document," without implementation of its initial phase within the proposed three-phase structure.[36]

Simultaneously, in February 2024, Cairo hosted indirect negotiations between Israeli and Hamas delegations, including a high-level meeting on 13/2/2024 with US, Israeli and Qatari officials to discuss de-escalation and a potential prisoner exchange. However, disputes over the terms of the exchange prevented any breakthrough.[37] Amid rising talk of a large-scale military operation in Rafah, in

February 2024 Cairo issued warnings regarding the consequences of such an incursion and hinted at the possible suspension of the "peace treaty" should Israel proceed.[38]

In March 2024, Cairo hosted an Arab meeting to discuss a humanitarian truce, with the PA participation.[39] It then joined a trilateral initiative with France and Jordan on 8/4/2024, calling for an immediate ceasefire and the release of all hostages.[40] On 12/5/2024, Egypt announced its official intervention in support of the case before the ICJ against Israel, reflecting an expansion of its role into the international legal domain.[41] In the same month, Egypt rejected CNN's allegations of document manipulation during negotiations, emphasizing that attempts to undermine its mediation would only worsen conditions in the GS and the wider region, and warning that it might reconsider its involvement if such challenges persisted. In the same month, Egypt rejected CNN's allegations of document manipulation during negotiations, emphasizing that attempts to undermine its mediation would only worsen conditions in the GS and the wider region, and warning that it might reconsider its involvement if such challenges persisted.[42]

Mediation efforts intensified in late 2024 and early 2025, culminating in a ceasefire agreement on 19/1/2025, brokered by Egypt and Qatar with US support. The accord provided for prisoner exchanges, Israeli withdrawal, humanitarian aid delivery, and the initiation of reconstruction.[43] However, Israel's refusal to advance to the second phase and its resumption of military operations on 18/3/2025[44] effectively reset the crisis, compelling Cairo to sustain its efforts to contain the escalation. On 18/3/2025, Egypt put forward a new ceasefire proposal for the GS following the collapse of the previous agreement. The initiative offered a mediated compromise, calling for a halt to hostilities, the reopening of the Rafah crossing for the evacuation of the wounded, and the delivery of humanitarian aid. In return, Palestinian resistance groups would release a number of wounded Israeli prisoners and the bodies of dual-nationality detainees, with final figures to be agreed once both parties accepted the proposal's humanitarian framework. The plan aimed to restore calm and lay the groundwork for renewed negotiations on resuming the ceasefire.[45]

In this context, security sources reported on 27/3/2025 that Cairo had received positive signals from Israel regarding its proposal, which Hamas had approved. An Egyptian security delegation subsequently traveled to Doha to

discuss implementation mechanisms amid efforts to establish a ceasefire before ‘Eid al-Fitr.[46] However, Israel did not act on the proposal, preventing its implementation and allowing military operations to continue.

Egypt sustained its diplomatic efforts in the following months, and in August 2025, it jointly announced with Qatar a new initiative outlining a pathway toward a comprehensive agreement to end the war. The plan included a temporary sixty-day halt to military operations, during which selected Palestinian prisoners would be exchanged for Israeli hostages in GS. While Hamas endorsed the initiative, Israel issued no official response,[47] leaving the proposal as part of ongoing efforts to stabilize the ceasefire and advance a broader peace settlement.

In this context, the Sharm El-Sheikh negotiations began on 6/10/2025 under Egyptian-Qatari-US sponsorship, aiming to establish broader agreements to end the war, based on a plan proposed by US President Donald Trump.[48] Officially announced on 9/10/2025, the plan called for an immediate ceasefire,[49] with Egypt receiving praise from Trump for advancing the negotiations.[50] On 13/10/2025, Cairo hosted the Sharm El-Sheikh Summit For Peace, co-chaired by Egyptian President ‘Abdul Fattah al-Sisi and US President Donald Trump, with wide international participation, seeking to consolidate the ceasefire and initiate the post-conflict reconstruction process.[51]

At the Arab level, Egypt convened the Extraordinary Arab Summit, designated the “Palestine Summit,” on 4/3/2025. The summit followed remarks by US President Donald Trump indicating an intention to assume control of the GS and relocate its population to neighboring states. Against this backdrop, the proceedings focused on categorically rejecting displacement proposals and formulating a coordinated framework for the reconstruction of the GS.[52]

Within the framework of “the day after” arrangements, Cairo set out a series of guiding principles. Chief among these were the indivisibility of the Palestinian territories and the rejection of any approach that isolates the GS from the WB, including East Jerusalem. Egypt also called for the PA’s return to the GS, the protection of the Palestinian population’s continued presence there, Israel’s withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories, and the realization of the Palestinian people’s legitimate rights, foremost the right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent state.[53] Concurrently, Egypt proposed a

non-factional transitional framework based on the establishment of a technocratic committee to administer the GS. This would be accompanied by the rehabilitation and redeployment of Palestinian police forces, as well as the training of thousands of new personnel in coordination with regional partners, with the aim of reconstructing the security architecture under the authority of the PA.[54] Cairo further underscored that governance of the GS must remain exclusively Palestinian, categorically rejecting any model of foreign administration.[55]

Furthermore, in February 2025, Cairo advanced a reconstruction framework aimed at ensuring that the population remains in the GS. The proposal provided for the establishment of temporary safe zones and the phased rehabilitation of infrastructure in partnership with international firms. In so doing, it constituted a clear response to, and rejection of, any initiatives premised on the displacement of Palestinians.[56]

Cairo further articulated this position through Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly at an international meeting held at the UN headquarters in New York on 24/9/2025. The meeting, convened at the invitation of French President Emmanuel Macron to discuss the "day after" and support stability in the GS, provided Egypt with an opportunity to reiterate that the viability of post-war arrangements hinges on addressing the structural causes of the conflict rather than treating the GS in isolation. Accordingly, Cairo emphasized that such arrangements must extend beyond narrowly defined security frameworks and be anchored in a clear political pathway with defined mechanisms for realizing a Palestinian state, while recognizing the GS as an integral and inseparable component of that state.[57]

At the security and political levels, Egypt emphasized the necessity of international guarantees for both the Palestinian and Israeli sides, insisting that any security arrangements be embedded within a clear political framework leading to the establishment of a Palestinian state. It expressed conditional openness to a potential international mission to support the transitional phase on the ground, provided its mandate is determined by the UNSC,[58] while cautioning against assigning such a force the task of disarming factions, which could provoke armed clashes.[59] Furthermore, Egypt rejected an Israeli proposal for it to administer the GS for a 15-year transitional period as part of the post-war "day after" plan, reportedly in exchange for debt cancellation.[60] Cairo also reaffirmed its commitment to

UNRWA, firmly opposing any replacement, and viewed attacks on the Agency as attempts to undermine international support for the Palestinian people.[61]

On the humanitarian front, in 2024 Egypt officially asserted that it bears no responsibility for hindering the delivery of aid to the GS, emphasizing that the Egyptian side of the crossing remained open. It highlighted that the main obstacles stemmed from the security situation, Israeli military operations, and Israel's control over the Palestinian side. This stance addressed repeated Israeli accusations attributing restrictions on aid to Egypt;[62] on 14/5/2024, the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed that legal responsibility for the GS's humanitarian situation rests with Israel.[63]

Egypt also released detailed figures on the humanitarian convoys it had prepared or facilitated into the GS, aiming to counter allegations of complicity in the blockade.[64] Furthermore, in May 2024, it arranged temporary coordination with the Palestinian side to deliver aid through the Karm Abu Salem crossing, pending an agreement on Palestinian management of the Rafah crossing.[65]

Conversely, international investigative reports raised controversy over the commercialization of crossings by intermediaries and private companies, noting fees of $4,500–$10 thousand per person for those seeking to leave the GS. While some allegations suggested links between these networks and Egyptian security bodies, officials refrained from direct comment, leaving the issue confined to media debate without official resolution.[66]

In a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 7/5/2024, Egypt condemned Israel's military operations in the Palestinian city of Rafah and the subsequent Israeli control over the Palestinian side of the Rafah crossing. It described this escalation as a grave threat to the lives of more than one million Palestinians who depend primarily on the crossing. Furthermore, Egypt urged Israel to exercise maximum restraint and to avoid brinkmanship policies with far-reaching consequences, cautioning that such measures would jeopardize efforts to achieve a sustainable truce in GS.[67]

At the security level, Israeli media reports in June 2024 indicated that the Israeli army, in coordination with Egypt, was planning to establish a new Rafah crossing near the Israeli Karm Abu Salem crossing. The proposed "new Rafah crossing" was reportedly to be located at the tri-border point closest to Karm Abu Salem and operated under joint arrangements involving Israel, Egypt, the Palestinian

side, and the US, thereby facilitating enhanced inspection procedures to regulate cross-border movement. Israeli Channel 12 reported that the Israeli army planned to "coordinate with Egypt to build an above- and underground barrier along the Philadelphi Corridor."[68] However, Egyptian security sources denied these claims.[69]

Egypt secured its northeastern border through measures that included destroying over 1,500 tunnels between Sinai and the GS, reinforcing the boundary with a concrete wall nearly six meters high and equally deep below ground, and establishing a five-kilometer buffer zone.[70]

By contrast, the rejection of displacement has remained a central tenet of Egypt's policy. Through official statements and public statements, Cairo has consistently opposed any plan to transfer Palestinians outside the GS, viewing such measures as a direct threat to Egypt's national security and an attempt to undermine the Palestine issue.[71] In this context, the Egyptian Presidency affirmed on 5/9/2024 that any attempts to displace Palestinians are destined to fail, reiterating that the sole viable solution is the implementation of a two-state framework, with an independent Palestinian state within the 4/6/1967 borders and East Jerusalem as its capital.[72]

Moreover, on 26/1/2025, the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed its categorical rejection of any infringement upon the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, cautioning against the destabilizing regional repercussions of displacement policies.[73] On 27/2/2025, Cairo hosted a human rights conference with participation from Arab and international organizations, alongside Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories. The participants stressed the urgent need to prevent the displacement of Palestinians, hold perpetrators accountable, and condemned Israel's policies promoting continued aggression, settlement expansion and forced displacement.[74]

Subsequently, on 21/3/2025, Egypt's State Information Service (SIS) dismissed allegations that residents of the GS had been relocated to North Sinai.[75] Later, on 16/7/2025, Cairo formally rejected Israeli proposals to establish a humanitarian tent city in Rafah near the Sinai border, as well as any demographic change in the GS.[76]

This stance continued into the second half of 2025. On 5/9/2025, Egypt underscored that it would not participate in any arrangements resulting in the

displacement of Palestinians.[77] It subsequently reaffirmed, in November 2025, its rejection of proposals to partition the GS or uproot its inhabitants.[78] More broadly, Cairo asserted that any attempt to displace the Palestinian people or eliminate the Palestine issue would constitute a crime of ethnic cleansing.[79]

This position aligned with Egypt's broader conception of the peace process, which places the two-state solution at its core as the only viable path to regional stability. In international forums, including the High-level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, held at the UN headquarters in New York in July 2025, Cairo reaffirmed its consistent support for the establishment of an independent and territorially unified Palestinian state encompassing the WB and the GS.[80] Moreover, at the final plenary meeting of the conference convened in New York on 22/9/2025, Egypt reiterated that the two-state solution represents a "security necessity," not merely a political option. It stressed that lasting stability in the Middle East remains contingent upon a just and comprehensive settlement that ensures the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the 4/6/1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.[81]

During the war on the GS, Egypt consistently condemned Israeli attacks and warned of their political repercussions. Cairo emphasized that continued Israeli military operations and the dismissal of de-escalation proposals reflected a lack of political will to reduce tensions, arguing that reliance on force would deepen hostility and undermine prospects for sustainable "peace."[82] In this context, Egypt condemned in September 2025 the expansion of military operations and accompanying violations of international humanitarian law, stressing that rejecting ceasefire proposals risked worsening the humanitarian crisis.[83] This stance was reiterated in January 2026, when Cairo denounced repeated Israeli violations of the ceasefire as a direct threat to efforts to consolidate calm and an impediment to the political process.[84]

c. Relations with Israel

During the war on the GS (2024–2025), Egyptian-Israeli relations demonstrated a dual approach, combining public political pressure with the maintenance of practical cooperation channels. This balance reflected both the obligations of the "peace agreement" and the sensitivities of the regional and domestic context. Egypt played a pivotal role in negotiations and mediation, placing itself at the

center of regional management of the issue, while sustaining a public discourse linking "genuine peace" in the Middle East to the establishment of a Palestinian state in line with international legitimacy. President 'Abdul Fattah al-Sisi described Egypt's experience with Israel as a historical model for "peacebuilding."[85]

Diplomatically, Egypt did not formally withdraw its ambassador from Israel during the war on the GS but effectively left the post vacant after recalling Ambassador Khaled Azmi in late summer 2024. It also declined to accredit a new Israeli ambassador following Amira Oron's term that ended in 2024, a move symbolically tied to the war on the GS and tensions over the Philadelphi Corridor and the Rafah crossing.[86]

Relations nonetheless experienced discernible strain, reflected in public exchanges of accusations and statements. This tension was particularly evident when, on 12/5/2024, Egypt announced its formal support for South Africa's case against Israel before the ICJ,[87] a diplomatic escalation signaling criticism of military operations in the GS, yet without resulting in a rupture of coordination mechanisms. Indeed, Western reports from Cairo in May 2024 indicated that security coordination persisted, especially with respect to border arrangements and Sinai. This reportedly included prior notification to Egypt of the incursion into Rafah and the advance of Israeli military to the Philadelphi Corridor and up to the Egyptian gate of the Rafah crossing on the Palestinian side, in full coordination with the US.[88]

During 2024–2025, Cairo hosted visits by senior Israeli security officials, including Herzi Halevi, Chief of the General Staff of the Israeli army, and Ronen Bar, chief of Shabak, to discuss developments related to Rafah and the Israeli hostages held in the GS.[89] In parallel, Egyptian military officials participated in regional meetings that brought together Arab and Israeli military leaders, including a gathering in Bahrain to explore prospects for regional security cooperation with the Israeli Chief of the General Staff.[90] However, in July 2024, Cairo formally denied the existence of any joint security arrangements with Israel regarding the border with the GS, accusing Israeli actors of promoting such claims to divert attention from operational setbacks in the Strip.[91]

The Washington Post reported on 11/10/2025 an expansion of security cooperation between several Arab states and Israel conducted away from public scrutiny. Citing US documents, including presentations prepared by United States

Central Command (CENTCOM) covering the period 2022–2025, the report outlined what the US military described as a "Regional Security Construct." This framework reportedly brings together several Arab states, including Egypt, alongside Israel, and documents secret meetings among senior officials, joint exercises, and various forms of intelligence cooperation.[92]

Economically, the normalization process between Egypt and Israel persisted through 2024–2025, particularly in the energy sector. Gas exports to Egypt and Jordan rose 25% in 2023, despite a partial suspension at the onset of Israel's military offensive in the GS,[93] and increased a further 13.4% in 2024, even amid ongoing hostilities.[94] According to Israel's Ministry of Energy in February 2024, the offshore Leviathan field, operated by Chevron in partnership with two Israeli companies, produced 6.29 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas for Egypt. The Tamar field exported 2.56 bcm, mostly to Egypt, despite an 11% production drop due to a month-long halt in operations at the start of Israel's war against Hamas.[95]

This trend was further reinforced in August 2025 with Israel's Leviathan natural gas field signing the largest export agreement in the country's history, worth up to $35 billion to supply gas to Egypt, providing approximately 130 bcm of gas through 2040, or until all of the contract quantities are fulfilled. Israeli Energy Minister Eli Cohen described it as "the largest gas deal in history," highlighting its political and economic significance. He noted, "It consolidates our position as a leading regional energy power upon which neighboring states rely and which they need," while also injecting billions of dollars into the state treasury, creating jobs, and strengthening the broader economy. The Israeli Broadcasting Authority reported that exports to Egypt under the deal will triple.[96]

However, this trajectory later faced strain. In September 2025, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly directed that the major gas agreement with Egypt should not proceed without his personal authorization, citing alleged Egyptian breaches of the peace treaty through military reinforcements in Sinai.[97] Nonetheless, on 16/9/2025, Chevron Corporation announced the launch of the Nitzana natural gas pipeline to transport gas from the Leviathan gasfield to Egypt. Once completed within three years, the pipeline is projected to transport around 600 million cubic feet (about 17 million cubic meters) of natural gas per day, increasing Israel's total export capacity to Egypt to more than 2.2 billion cubic feet (about 62 million cubic meters) per day.[98]

Trade between the two countries persisted throughout the war. According to the Israeli CBS, Israeli exports to Egypt increased from about $259 million in 2023 to $305 million in 2024, before falling to $203 million in 2025. In contrast, Israeli imports from Egypt grew steadily over the same period, rising from about $183 million in 2023 to $274 million in 2024 and reaching $358 million in 2025 (see table 1/6).

d. Popular Egyptian Response

The Egyptian public's reaction to the war on the GS (2023–2025) reflected a tension between broad societal solidarity with stringent state regulation of the public sphere. While the state adopted an official diplomatic discourse supportive of Gaza, it concurrently implemented a security-centered approach designed to preclude the expansion of domestic protest, while permitting only organized, officially sanctioned acts of solidarity. In late March 2025, following Eid al-Fitr prayers, demonstrations arose in Cairo and several governorates opposing the displacement of Palestinians. Sources from the Mostaqbal Watan Party, which holds the parliamentary majority, reported coordinated gatherings in front of multiple mosques. SIS, responsible for foreign media, claimed that millions of Egyptians participated in solidarity gatherings across roughly 6,240 designated Eid prayer sites nationwide in various governorates.[99]

At the same time, human rights documentation indicates that dozens of participants in solidarity demonstrations were arrested from October 2023 onward, on charges of participating in unlawful assemblies or joining "terrorist" groups, despite the peaceful nature of these protests. Reports by Human Rights Watch (HRW) record the arrest of at least 72 individuals between 20 and 24/10/2023, followed by additional detentions of activists, either from their homes or while attempting to take part in demonstrations.[100]

This approach continued throughout 2024 and 2025. Reports by Amnesty International and the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights documented the detention of more than 120 individuals in connection with solidarity-related activities, including peaceful protest, online expression, displaying banners calling for the opening of the Rafah crossing, and criticism of official policies. The reports also referred to the forcible dispersal of demonstrations, prolonged pretrial detention on charges such as spreading false news or unlawful assembly, and the referral of dozens of activists to trial.[101] Taken together, these measures

reflect a calibrated approach that distinguishes between external support for the Palestine issue and the tight regulation of domestic mobilization, thereby curbing the potential transformation of solidarity into sustained political pressure.

Amid the narrowing of space for public protest, economic boycotts emerged as the primary mode of popular expression. Sales at McDonald's franchises in Egypt fell by at least 70% in October and November 2023 compared to the same period a year earlier,[102] underscoring the growing impact of boycott campaigns. Furthermore, the Atlantic Council noted a marked rise in demand for local alternatives, particularly in the soft drinks sector, where "sales of Egypt's local soda alternatives have increased 500 percent since October 7, 2023."[103] Taken together, these trends suggest a deliberate effort by consumers to align their purchasing behavior with their political and ethical stances. The boycott thus evolved from a consumer choice into a politically and symbolically charged practice. In parallel, retailers displayed symbols supportive of Palestine, including the Palestinian flag, and actively promoted local substitutes,[104] thereby rendering the marketplace an indirect arena of expression within the public sphere.

The 2024/2025 Arab Opinion Index, published by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS) and conducted between November 2024 and August 2025, shows that 77% of respondents in Egypt regard the Palestine issue as a collective Arab cause rather than solely a Palestinian one, whereas 17% view it as exclusively Palestinian. Furthermore, with respect to Egypt's potential recognition of Israel, 87% of respondents expressed opposition, compared to 12% in favor, while 1% either did not know or declined to answer.[105]

The high proportion of respondents who view the Palestine issue as a cause concerning all Arabs attests to the enduring salience of the pan-Arab dimension in shaping Egyptian public opinion, despite regional political shifts. Furthermore, the substantial opposition to recognizing Israel points to a marked divergence between popular sentiment and official policy orientations, highlighting the continued symbolic and affective weight of the issue in the construction of political identity. These patterns accord with findings from earlier rounds of the Arab Index, which indicate a relatively stable centrality of the Palestine issue within the hierarchy of Egyptian public opinion priorities.

Ultimately, Egyptian public sentiment has demonstrated a growing societal rejection of popular normalization, favoring daily or symbolic protests over

large-scale demonstrations. In this context, six opposition parties established the "Popular Front for Social Justice — Right of the People," emphasizing the need to confront violations of Egyptian sovereignty and threats to national security, primarily from Israel, while providing support to the Palestinian resistance.[106] This has reflected the continued salience of the Palestine issue in domestic political discourse within the constraints of the available political space.

2. Jordan

Jordan's approach to the Palestine issue in general, and to Israeli aggression against GS during 2024–2025 in particular, has been shaped by complex political, security and economic calculations, with its position defined by several key determinants, most notably:

- Jordan shares the longest border with historic Palestine, stretching about 335 km (97 km with the WB and 238 km with Israel). Furthermore, Jordanians maintain deep ties with Palestine due to history, geographic proximity, and intertwined families; millions are Palestinian refugees displaced by Israeli occupation aggression in 1948 and 1967, alongside those who arrived during the period of Jordan-WB unity (1950–1988). This is further underscored by the longstanding Hashemite custodianship over Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.[107]
- Several Jordanians carried out shootings targeting Israeli soldiers in September 2024,[108] October 2024,[109] and September 2025,[110] prompting Israel to continue building a separation wall between Jordan and Israel.[111] Jordan sees this as an attempt to block any future geographic connection with Palestine.[112]
- Jordan perceives the ruling Israeli right's strategy as one of territorial expansion coupled with transferring the Palestinian demographic burden to neighboring states, particularly Egypt and Jordan, through the displacement of GS residents to Egypt and WB residents to Jordan, reflecting the "alternative homeland" concept advanced by segments of the Israeli right.[113]
- At its core, Jordan's policy toward the Palestine issue is grounded in support for the peace process and the two-state solution, efforts to maintain calm in the WB, and the strengthening of the PA to prevent its collapse or erosion in favor of other actors.[114] Moreover, Jordan fears that a PA collapse could trigger internal Palestinian infighting, which Israel might exploit to reshape the landscape and pave the way for the forced displacement of Palestinians into Jordan.[115]

- This Jordanian outlook, supporting the peace process and the PA, implicitly rejects the approach of armed resistance factions such as Hamas. Accordingly, the Hamas and Jordan relationship "remains generally lukewarm, and may sometimes become tense due to what Jordan refers to as Hamas' military activities on its territory."[116]
- Jordan has been bound by a "peace" treaty with Israel since 1994 (the Wadi 'Araba Agreement), alongside strategic economic arrangements, including a gas import deal and a preliminary water-for-electricity exchange agreement.
- The Jordanian regime's close alignment with the US, and its substantial dependence on US support, particularly in light of Israel's centrality to US policy in the Arab region, therefore necessitates a distinct set of strategic calculations and considerations on the part of Jordan.
- Politically, Jordan aligns with the Arab "moderation axis," alongside Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, a bloc generally critical of Hamas and "Political Islam" movements.[117]
- Jordan's domestic equation reflects two conflicting dynamics. On the one hand, widespread public anger over Israeli massacres in GS, and support for Hamas's military operations against Israel, makes any official stance perceived as out of step with public sentiment vulnerable to backlash. On the other hand, strained relations between the Jordanian regime and Hamas are tied to Hamas's ideological and political links with Muslim Brothers (MB) Movement in Jordan, which has been in a "sustained crisis" with the executive authority and is increasingly viewed within ruling circles as a domestic rival amid fears of political exploitation.[118] This was evident in the September 2024 parliamentary elections, when the Islamic Action Front (IAF), affiliated with MB Movement, won 31 of 138 seats, the highest tally in its parliamentary history since the 1950s.[119]
- The war has hit Jordan's tourism sector, with Tourism Minister Makram al-Qaisi reporting a 50% drop in hotel bookings since the outbreak of the war in GS. This affects the economy and society, as nearly 600 thousand people work directly in tourism. At the macroeconomic level, prices of essential goods have risen due to disruptions in regional supply chains and trade, particularly via the Red Sea, which Jordan relies on for importing many basic commodities. Simultaneously, increased security and defense spending in response to regional tensions has

strained the national budget, limiting resources for development and public services.[120]

a. Development of Political Relations and Diplomatic Engagement

In response to these challenges, Jordan adopted a multifaceted approach to the security threats arising during the two years of Operation al-Aqsa Flood (2024–2025).

Politically, in his address to the UN on 24/9/2024, King ʻAbdullah II warned the international community that Jordan would under no circumstances accept being turned into "an alternative homeland."[121] Similarly, in September 2024, Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi declared that "any attempt to displace Palestinians from the West Bank towards Jordan will be viewed by us as a declaration of war and we will work with it accordingly."[122]

After US President Donald Trump announced on 4/2/2025, plans to control GS and relocate its residents to neighboring countries, especially Egypt and Jordan, King ʻAbdullah II, following his meeting with Trump in Washington on 11/2/2025 signaled his indirect rejection, citing Jordan's national interest. He stressed that "Egypt and Arab countries will present a plan on Gaza," and reiterated that "rebuilding Gaza without displacing the Palestinians and addressing the dire humanitarian situation should be the priority for all."[123] On 17/2/2025, he reaffirmed, "For 25 years, I have been saying no to displacement, no to resettlement, no to the alternative homeland."[124]

Meanwhile, the Jordanian regime did not heed growing calls, from both the elite and the public, to strengthen ties with Hamas and other Palestinian resistance factions.[125] Instead, 2024–2025 witnessed a period of stagnation, and at times tension, in bilateral relations, driven by two key issues:

The first issue involved Hamas' April 2025 call for Jordanian authorities to release individuals arrested for allegedly participating in plots to sow disorder, while insisting they had not threatened the kingdom's security or stability. That same month, Jordanian authorities reported the arrest of 16 people accused of planning unrest within the country, including possession of explosives and firearms, a scheme to manufacture drones, and the recruitment and training of operatives both domestically and abroad.[126]

The second issue involved criticism by Khalil al-Hayya, head of Hamas in GS, who, in his 27/7/2025 speech, denounced the "farcical" airlift operations delivering aid to GS. He called for the opening of crossings and the provision of aid in a dignified manner, and urged popular mobilization in neighboring countries to support Palestine and pressure embassies. Al-Hayya specifically addressed the Jordanian people, encouraging them to sustain their popular uprising, intensify efforts to halt the heinous crimes, and prevent the Zionist right from advancing its plan regarding the notion of an "alternative homeland" and the division of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.[127] His speech sparked official Jordanian anger, and on 28/7/2025, the state-owned channel "AlMamlaka TV" aired a report condemning his remarks, criticizing his appeal to the Jordanian public and describing it as "inciting chaos" in Jordan and across the Arab world.[128]

Regarding Jordan's role in the aftermath of the Gaza war, King 'Abdullah II reaffirmed his refusal to deploy Jordanian forces to GS if the mission of any "international forces" were "peace enforcing" rather than "peacekeeping." He stressed, "Peacekeeping is that you're sitting there supporting the local police force, the Palestinians, which Jordan and Egypt are willing to train in large numbers… If we're running around Gaza on patrol with weapons, that's not a situation that any country would like to get involved in."[129] In a joint statement with the foreign ministers of seven Arab and Muslim countries, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Türkiye, Indonesia, and Pakistan, Jordan welcomed the invitation extended by US President Donald Trump to join the Board of Peace (BoP). The statement underscored the signatories' "commitment to supporting the implementation of the mission of the BoP as a transitional administration…. aimed at consolidating a permanent ceasefire, supporting the reconstruction of Gaza, and advancing a just and lasting peace grounded in the Palestinian right to self-determination and statehood in accordance with international law."[130]

Domestically in Jordan, and unlike many Arab states, the authorities sought to accommodate popular reactions expressing solidarity with GS in the face of genocidal crimes, allowing relatively broad space for public anger and support for the Palestinian people. This facilitated sustained street mobilization across much of the country since 7/10/2023. Nevertheless, a strict policy barred demonstrations from reaching the Israeli embassy in Amman or approaching border areas with Palestinian territories under Israeli occupation, a strategy that largely contained

public anger and avoided security repercussions. However, dissatisfaction with the ceiling of the official stance persisted, as popular demands continued for the full severance of relations with Israel, beyond recalling the Jordanian ambassador and freezing the embassy's work in Amman. Calls also persisted to block trucks bound for Israel from transiting Jordanian territory[131] and to deliver aid to GS by force.[132]

Accordingly, Jordan's security response to demonstrations supporting GS became more forceful. Authorities launched arrest campaigns against activists and protesters involved in pro-Gaza mobilization, and some demonstrators were reportedly beaten by security forces. In the same context, Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan dismissed several students and referred others to disciplinary committees for participating in a solidarity event with GS.[133] Moreover, on 23/4/2025, Jordanian authorities banned all activities of the MB Movement, designating it an illegal organization.[134] The decision was officially justified by the arrest of 16 individuals (linked to the MB Movement) accused of illicitly manufacturing rockets and drones and recruiting and training members to "provoke chaos and sabotage within the Kingdom."[135] The movement denied any involvement, arguing that the measure was driven by its active role in pro-Gaza demonstrations. Consequently, pressure on Jordan's pro-Gaza popular mobilization is likely to intensify, particularly in light of Trump's measures to designate several branches of the MB Movement (in Jordan, Egypt, and Lebanon) as "terrorist" organizations.[136]

In response to border-related challenges, Jordan has reinforced its security posture by deploying additional military forces along its borders with Israel, Syria and Iraq to counter potential cross-border threats and prevent infiltration through Jordanian territory toward Israel.[137] Furthermore, Crown Prince Al-Hussein bin 'Abdullah II announced the reactivation of the "National Military Service Program (mandatory conscription)" for the first time since its abolition in 1992, with implementation scheduled to begin in 2026.[138]

Regarding the use of Jordanian airspace as a theatre for reciprocal military strikes between Israel and Iran, the Jordanian Public Security Directorate stated in a communiqué issued on 1/10/2024 that Royal Air Force aircraft and air defense systems had intercepted numerous missiles and drones that entered the Kingdom's airspace.[139] Subsequently, on 13/6/2025, the General Command of the Jordan Armed Forces announced the interceptions of "several missiles and drones" following military assessments "indicating that the missiles and drones were

likely to fall within Jordanian territory, including populated areas, posing a potential threat to civilian safety."[140] Furthermore, the Minister of Government Communication and the Jordanian Government Spokesperson, Mohammad Momani, affirmed that the Kingdom "has not and will not allow any violation of its airspace, reaffirming that the Kingdom will not be a battleground for any conflict."[141]

On the humanitarian front, Jordan, for instance, has provided substantial assistance to GS through the Jordan Hashemite Charitable Organization (JHCO) in the period following the October 2023 war and up to 4/8/2025, amounting to $335 million. This assistance has encompassed the delivery of 111,406 tons of aid, the provision of 6 thousand units of blood, and the fitting of 532 prosthetic limbs under the "Restoring Hope" initiative.[142]

b. Relations with Israel

Under US pressure, Israel agreed to extend its October 2021 water supply agreement with Jordan, originally signed with the Bennett-Lapid government and set to expire in May 2024, for only six months,[143] despite Jordan's request for a five-year renewal, amid heightened bilateral tensions linked to the war on the GS.[144]

In 2024, Israel's natural gas exports to Egypt and Jordan increased by about 13.4%.[145] During the war, Jordan and Türkiye were the main exporters of fruits and vegetables to Israel,[146] helping offset shortages in Israel's agricultural sector. A land supply route from the UAE to Israel via Saudi and Jordanian territory also operated after the Houthis blocked Israeli ships at the Bab al-Mandab Strait. The Jordanian government noted that the exports reflected private-sector decisions rather than government policy[147] and reaffirmed its commitment to free transit agreements.[148]

3. Syria

a. Development of Political Relations and Diplomatic Engagement

Socially

Regardless of the policy pursued by the new Syrian leadership under President Ahmad al-Sharaa toward Palestinians, the broader challenges facing Syria are expected to impact Palestinian refugees in the short and medium term.[149] These key challenges can be summarized in four main points:

1. **Reconstruction of Palestinian Refugee Camps (RCs):** Palestinians in Syria aim to rebuild destroyed RCs, particularly Yarmouk, Ein el Tal (Handarat) and Dara'a, to enable the return of displaced residents and restore normal life.[150] The lifting of economic sanctions on the Assad regime is expected to accelerate reconstruction and boost the country's economy, benefiting both Syrians and Palestinians.[151]
2. **The issue of detainees and the forcibly disappeared**: Palestinians in Syria continue to call for the release of those still held in the security branches and prisons of the former regime.
3. **The return of refugees** has seen promising progress under Syria's new administration. Security barriers in Yarmouk RC were removed, allowing free movement for Palestinians. Furthermore, Syrian Palestinians can now cross from Lebanon into Syria using only their personal Syrian IDs (the temporary residency documents previously issued to Palestinian refugees by the former authorities), without passports.[152]
4. **Civil and Political Rights:** Palestinians hope to recover properties confiscated by the former Assad regime and its allies, especially those of individuals displaced to northern Syria who supported the Syrian opposition. This process has already begun in some RCs, with rights being restored to their rightful owners.[153]

In a significant move to rectify the legal status of thousands of Palestinian refugees in Syria lacking official documentation, the General Administration for Palestine Arab Refugees (GAPAR), under the Syrian Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, issued a circular in October 2025 addressing a gap in the application of Law No. 260 of 1956. While this law had granted Palestinian refugees civil rights on par with Syrian citizens, excluding nationality and the right to run for office and vote, it had previously applied only to those who entered Syria between 1948 and 1956, leaving tens of thousands who arrived in later waves, after the June 1967 *Naksah* and the September 1970 events, excluded. The circular allows all affected refugees to register with GAPAR, thereby extending the protections of Law No. 260 and restoring fundamental rights such as education, employment and healthcare, which they had been denied for decades. Despite broad Palestinian approval, calls remain to revise Law No. 260, as it still limits certain rights, including restricting ownership to a single property.[154]

Palestinian hopes for a role in shaping Syria's future are rising, with some positive signs emerging. Notably, Ahmad al-Sharaa, leader of Syria's new administration, appointed Ghiath Diab, a Palestinian refugee, as Minister of Oil in the interim government, the first time a Palestinian has held such a post.[155] Moreover, Palestinian refugees can now apply to join the General Security Directorate following the end of mandatory service.[156]

Although these appointments signaled a positive shift, they mainly involved figures linked to Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) or technocrats chosen for their expertise.[157] Expectations for Palestinian refugee representation in the Syrian national dialogue, which would have reinforced their sense of inclusion in Syria's future; however, no Palestinian refugees took part in these sessions.[158]

Politically

The new Syrian administration under President Ahmad al-Sharaa has tightened control over Palestinian factions that fought alongside the Assad regime during the uprising, demanding they surrender weapons and vacate their bases, prompting most leaders to leave Syria.[159] The authorities have also targeted faction members with ties to Iran.[160] Although al-Sharaa returned bases to Hamas and lifted the ban on its property, confiscated by the previous regime after Hamas refused to join internal fighting,[161] Palestinian concerns remain over the shrinking of political activity in Syria, potentially reducing it to humanitarian work.[162] These concerns intensified after the US urged the Syrian transitional government to "take necessary steps to ban and deport Palestinian terror groups" as part of the conditions for sanctions relief.[163] Syrian authorities have affirmed their commitment "that Syria will not pose a threat to any country in the region or the world, including Israel."[164]

In contrast to its tightening restrictions on Palestinian factions in Syria, the new Syrian administration has opened channels with the PA, hosting an official delegation on 28/1/2025.[165] The future course of PA-al-Sharaa relations is likely to depend on two key factors. First, the new Syrian leadership's position toward the broader Palestinian political landscape, particularly regarding the legitimacy of Palestinian representation; the PA's visit appears aimed at pre-empting rival movements seeking greater influence within Palestinian refugee camps in Syria. Second, this factor relates to regional and Arab positions regarding the ongoing changes in Syria, as the PA recognizes the need to act in accordance with the orientations of key regional actors.[166]

b. Relations with Israel

On the Military Level

Palestinian factions cooperating with Lebanese Hizbullah fired mortar shells from southern Syria toward the occupied Golan Heights three days after the launch of Operation al-Aqsa Flood (10/10/2023). Similar attacks by other Iran-aligned forces followed on 15 and 25/10/2023. However, military activity from the Syrian front was brief; calm soon prevailed along the Golan front and persisted throughout the intensive war on GS. This prolonged quiet was widely interpreted as a sign that Syria had withdrawn from active confrontation with Israel.[167]

Although "Israeli military operations in Syria and Lebanon were not explicitly aimed at toppling Assad's regime, Tel Aviv did not conceal its satisfaction with the outcome, considering the regime's fall to be the end of Iran's presence in Syria and a major blow" to Hizbullah in Lebanon. However, alongside "the initial satisfaction with Assad's fall, Israel has also expressed hostility toward Syria's new government. Arguably, Israel is the only country to adopt an explicit and direct hostile stance toward the new government in Damascus."[168] Israeli statements highlighted that the rise of jihadist Islamic forces as Assad's replacement threatened Israel's borders with Syria, stating that "Israel will not permit jihadi groups to fill that vacuum and threaten Israeli communities on the Golan Heights with October 7th-style attacks."[169]

Following Assad's fall, Israel adopted a two-pronged military strategy. The first involved airstrikes, Operation Bashan Arrow (*Hetz HaBashan*), carrying out "a thousand airstrikes, destroying many Syrian military and civilian institutions," including bombing "the presidential palace twice,"[170] destroying roughly 80% of Syria's army weapons.[171] The second involved ground incursions, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declaring that the 1974 Disengagement Agreement "has collapsed" and ordering "to seize control of the buffer zone between Israel and Syria, located in Syrian territory."[172] Within six months, the Israeli army fully seized the 252 km² buffer zone, including Mount Hermon just 38 km from Damascus, establishing 12 military posts, 10 in the buffer zone and two near the Bravo line. Among these positions is Hermon's summit, the highest peak overlooking Damascus.[173]

As of this writing, Israel controls over 500 km² across Dara'a and Quneitra, bordering the occupied Golan Heights, and parts of Suwayda,[174] following its

advance beyond the disengagement zone. Israeli media report that its tanks have reached within 12 km of Damascus.[175] Israel continues ground incursions into Syrian territory, with "more than 400 ground incursions."[176]

Initially, Israeli statements from the Prime Minister's Office[177] and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs[178] and Defense[179] stressed that Israel's military presence in Syria was "limited" and "temporary," meant only until a force complying with the 1974 Israel-Syria Disengagement Agreement could ensure security. Over time, however, official statements indicated that this presence would be indefinite. They asserted that the southern region, including Quneitra, Dara'a, and Suwayda, would be fully demilitarized, with Israeli forces remaining atop Mount Hermon (the recently occupied area). Any attempt by the new Syrian army to strengthen its capabilities in the south would be met with force, under the pretext of preventing "southern Syria to become southern Lebanon."[180] and protecting the Golan and Galilee from threats emanating from Syria, a principle drawn from the lessons of 7 October 2023.[181]

The Syrian response to this Israeli escalation was as follows:

1. On 9/12/2024, the Syrian Interim Government sent two identical letters to the UNSC and the UN Secretary-General, urging the UNSC "to take action to compel Israel to immediately stop its attacks on Syrian territory and withdraw from areas it has penetrated in the north in violation of a 1974 Disengagement Agreement."[182]
2. Since taking power, the new Syrian administration has sent reassuring messages to the international community and neighboring states, especially Israel, affirming it does not intend to continue hostilities. This marks a significant shift from Bashar al-Assad's era, which was defined by antagonism toward Israel and Syria's role as a frontline state in the so-called "Axis of Resistance."[183]
3. The new Syrian authorities took steps to prevent any potential escalation with Israel, including withdrawing heavy weapons in line with the force separation agreement or 1974 Disengagement Agreement, after the al-Assad regime had redeployed them along the border within the Bravo line under the pretext of combating armed opposition. They also withdrew heavy weapons from the interior and reinstated police checkpoints up to 10 km from the ceasefire line. These posts were responsible for inspecting and confiscating unregulated arms

from local residents, preventing military activity in the area, and carrying out security operations against leaders of armed groups connected to the former regime, Iran and Hizbullah.

4. The new Syrian administration turned to Arab and Western states, especially the US, whose ties with the al-Sharaa government had significantly improved, to pressure Israel and mediate a halt to its violations within Syria.
5. Regarding its relationship with Türkiye, whose presence in Syria Israel perceives as a threat on par with Iran, allegedly due to a strategic alignment with the new Syrian leadership, al-Sharaa seems to be steering the matter toward direct negotiations between Israel and Türkiye.[184] In this context, talks held in Azerbaijan resulted in an agreement to establish "a hotline to prevent possible military flare-ups and misunderstandings in Syria."[185]
6. In November 2025, talks were held between the Syrian and Russian sides regarding the redeployment of Russian military police patrols in southern Syria to act as a buffer between Israeli and Syrian forces.[186]

On the Political Level

1. Alliance with minorities

Israel's primary objective in Syria appears to center on fragmentation and decentralization through a federal or confederal structure composed of relatively balanced entities: Kurds in the northeast under US patronage; Sunnis in the northwest and central regions under the auspices of Türkiye and Sunni Arab states; 'Alawites along the coastal region (Latakia) under Russian patronage; Christians in Wadi al-Nasara under US protection; and Druze in the south (Suwayda) under Israeli patronage.[187] In February 2025, Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar stated, "Syria can only be stable if there is a federation that includes various autonomies and respects diverse lifestyles."[188]

In pursuit of this objective, "certain circles in Israel have advocated for an alliance with the Kurds in Syria, specifically the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), with the aim of supporting Kurdish separatism and preventing the new regime from asserting control over Kurdish-majority areas."[189] Moreover, Israel may have been among the most supportive actors behind SDF commander Mazloum 'Abdi's call to establish an autonomous region in Syria modeled on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.[190]

Alongside its support for Kurdish actors, Israel regards the Druze community in Syria as a relatively accessible entry point for intervention in Syrian internal affairs for several reasons. First, Druze-populated areas are located near territories Israel occupied in southern Syria following the regime's collapse. Second, Israel claims a degree of "legitimacy" through "the head of the Druze community in Israel, Muwafaq Tarif. Israel claims its relationship with the Druze is historic and that it has a commitment to the Druze as a religious minority."[191] Third, Israel, particularly its current coalition government, seeks to deepen Druze loyalty, especially among those serving in the Israeli military, security services and state institutions. Fourth, Israel aims to enhance its political and media image by promoting narratives that depict the Syrian regime as persecuting minorities while presenting itself as a defender of their rights and security. Consequently, segments of the Syrian Druze community may gain political weight exceeding their demographic size, partly due to perceived Israeli backing and alignment with movements resisting Damascus's authority.[192] Nevertheless, a strong nationalist Druze movement rejects engagement with Israel, cooperates constructively with the government in Damascus, and opposes separatist claims.

Israel exploited tensions in Jaramana, south of Damascus, on 1–2/3/2025 between Damascus government security forces and Druze gunmen.[193] In early March 2025, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Israel Katz stated that they had ordered the army to intervene to protect the Druze in Jaramana should Syrian government forces target them.[194] Similarly, the events in Suwayda between 13–17/7/2025 enabled Israel to deploy the Druze card against the Syrian state and tribal forces that had clashed with Druze groups, while implementing its prior warnings to Damascus.[195] Israel conducted airstrikes targeting the Syrian Ministry of Defense and General Staff headquarters in central Damascus, areas near the presidential palace,[196] and convoys of Syrian forces and tribal fighters.[197]

Concurrently, Israel provided food and medical humanitarian assistance to the Druze of Suwayda[198] and received wounded individuals through Druze communities in the occupied Golan Heights and nearby areas. Additional measures included allowing residents of Druze villages east of the Golan to work in Israel[199] and organizing a visit for dozens of Druze clerics from the Syrian village of Hader to the shrine of Nabi Shu'ayb in the Galilee, where they met Druze religious

leaders in Israel.[200] Reuters, citing Two senior Syrian Druze figures and a Western intelligence source reported that "Israel was also paying salaries for many of the roughly 3,000 Druze militia fighters."[201]

Israeli officials have repeatedly emphasized[202] the need to protect Israel's interests in Syria, whether through negotiations or military action, focusing mainly on demilitarizing southwestern Syria and safeguarding the Druze community.

This support reportedly led Hikmat al-Hijri, a Druze spiritual leader, to call for a separate "Druze region" independent of the Syrian state.[203] Hundreds also demonstrated in central Suwayda under the slogan "the right to self-determination," waving Druze and some Israeli flags.[204]

2. Normalization of Relations

The renewed discussion surrounding the possibility of an agreement between Israel and Syria raises several questions about what would each side stand to gain from such an agreement. From Israel's perspective, an agreement with Syria could offer significant strategic advantages: establishment of a calm, secure front on the northern border; forming of a joint struggle against the "Axis of Resistance" (Hizbullah, Iran and Palestinian factions); and an opportunity to rehabilitate Israel's regional and international standing, especially after a prolonged erosion of its legitimacy following the fighting in the Gaza Strip. From the Syrian perspective, an agreement with Israel could lead to an Israeli withdrawal from areas in southern Syria and a halt to Israeli airstrikes. These measures would allow the regime to focus resources on stabilizing the country and, most importantly, restore Syrian sovereignty over its territory. The agreement may also include provisions of particular significance: intelligence-security coordination between Israel and Syria as part of their joint fight against Hizbullah and Iran's presence in Syria, and later, economic cooperation such as Israeli gas exports to the Syrian market and joint water management in the Yarmouk Basin in coordination with Jordan.[205]

Building on these anticipated gains, talks were launched between Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer and Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani, under the auspices of President Trump's special envoy Tom Barrack, with the aim of reaching "security understandings regarding southern Syria."[206] According to media reports, the discussions included the following:

- Prohibiting all direct or indirect activity by Hamas and PIJ from Syrian territory, including political offices, logistical support, and the future presence of senior leaders.
- Ending regular meetings between Israeli military intelligence and the SDF in northeastern Syria, given their role in reinforcing separatist tendencies and undermining state unity.
- Implementing a phased Israeli withdrawal from all of the territories it has occupied in Syria since early 2025, "except for an outpost on the summit of the strategic Mount Hermon."
- Maintaining an aerial corridor to Iran via Syria in coordination with the US, thereby facilitating potential future strikes against Iran or Hizbullah.[207]
- Preventing Türkiye from rebuilding the Syrian army or consolidating control over Syrian airspace in ways that could constrain Israel's operational freedom.
- Establishing a humanitarian corridor between Israel and the city of Suwayda.[208]
- Establishing "a new demilitarized zone, modeled on the demilitarized zone in Egypt's Sinai. It calls for expanding the Syrian buffer zone by adding a two-kilometer area east of the Bravo Line, where any military or security forces are prohibited, subject to the authority of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF)." "The expanded buffer zone would be followed by a fully demilitarized zone where no Ministry of Defense personnel are allowed, though police and internal security forces could operate. The leaks did not specify the exact dimensions of this zone, although it is believed that the Israelis will demand a configuration similar to what was stipulated in the 2018 South Syria Agreement—extending 80 kilometers east of the new Bravo Line and encompassing the entire Dara'a and Suwayda governorates." Furthermore, "Israel seeks to ban Syrian warplanes from entering areas south of Damascus up to the border with the occupied Golan Heights, effectively establishing a no-fly zone."[209]
- According to Reuters, the US is reportedly planning to establish a military presence at an airbase in Damascus, strategically near southern Syria, which is expected to become a demilitarized zone under the anticipated security agreement between Israel and Syria, to monitor its implementation.[210] The Syrian Foreign Ministry, however, denied these claims.[211]

The new security agreement between Syria and Israel, expected to be announced during President Ahmad al-Sharaa's September 2025 UNGA visit to New York, was not disclosed. Reuters reported that the delay stemmed from Tel Aviv's insistence on a corridor linking Israel to Syria's Suwayda Governorate, though this alone does not fully explain the impasse despite US pressure to finalize the deal.[212]

A review of recurring Syrian and Israeli statements suggests a series of obstacles that limit Syria's openness and normalization with Israel, preventing substantial progress in their relationship. The key among these are:

- The future of the occupied Golan Heights remains contentious. Israel insists that "in any peace agreement - the Golan will remain part of the State of Israel,"[213] a stance reinforced after Trump recognized its annexation during his first term. Conversely, the Syrian government under al-Sharaa cannot cede the territory, particularly in light of the symbolic significance of al-Sharaa's own name, "Abu Muhammad al-Julani,"[214] and in light of the UNGA's 2/12/2025 resolution calling for an end to Israel's occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights.[215]
- While the al-Sharaa administration seeks agreements with Israel to prevent operations or strikes on Syrian territory, Israel insists on maintaining the ability to respond to security threats, especially if it withdraws from the buffer zones as requested by Damascus.[216]
- The Syrian side calls for Israel's withdrawal from the areas it occupied after December 2024, restoring conditions under the 1974 agreement. Israel, however, contends that a secure withdrawal is currently impossible, citing several factors: the collapse of the Syrian army, the lack of an organized military force to maintain security, ongoing activity of armed Palestinian groups in the south, and the presence of Iranian-linked bases and militias that could exploit a withdrawal to reposition near the border.
- Israel firmly opposes the establishment of any Turkish military bases in central Syria, insisting on clear and specific limits on Turkish forces as part of any future agreement. In contrast, the Syrian government views Türkiye's presence as a counterbalance to Israel and Iran, especially in light of the Syrian army's weaknesses.[217]

- Israel continues to regard Syria's minority populations, especially the Druze and Kurds, as instruments to sustain its influence and leverage over the Syrian regime's internal affairs. At this sensitive juncture in Syria's history, Israel is unlikely to relinquish this advantage.[218] Many believe that Israel may consider a fragmented Syria more beneficial than a unified state capable of negotiating a "peace" agreement.[219]

Amid these challenges, a significant gap was evident between how the issue was being framed in Israel and how it was being portrayed in Syria. In Israel, the term "normalization" was frequently used, accompanied by references to the possibility of Syria joining the Abraham Accords. In Syria, however, the discourse was much more limited, cautious, and modest. From the Syrian perspective, the talks aim to establish a non-aggression pact and to update the framework of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement.[220]

Weighing the benefits and challenges of normalization with Israel, the Syrian leadership appears to face three potential options for managing its relationship with the Israeli side:

- Maintaining Syria's established position of rejecting political, economic and security normalization with Israel, while cautiously engaging with any urgent security imperatives aimed at curbing Israel's aggressive military actions inside Syrian territory.
- Gradual, partial openness and rapprochement with Israel, framed as a response to pressing political, economic and security necessities.
- Pursuing full normalization, whether bilateral or within a broader regional framework, led by Arab actors already engaged in the normalization track and the "Abraham Accords."[221]

Forecasts indicate that the likely outcome will fall between the first and second scenarios, shaped by the pressures and circumstances confronting the regime. While the political system, supported by the Syrian public, favors the first option, it will pragmatically pursue the second, seeing it as a necessary step to safeguard the regime and navigate a critical juncture.

However, the second scenario now seems more probable. On 6/1/2026, following a two-day trilateral meeting in Paris between the US, Israel and Syria, the US State Department issued a joint statement affirming both countries' commitment

"to strive toward achieving lasting security and stability arrangements for both countries" and to "establish a joint fusion mechanism… to facilitate immediate and ongoing coordination on their intelligence sharing, military de-escalation, diplomatic engagement, and commercial opportunities under the supervision of the United States."[222]

4. Lebanon

a. Development of Political Relations and Diplomatic Engagement

Socially: Palestinians in Lebanon could not expect their RCs to be spared from the war that followed Hizbullah's entry into the "Support for Gaza" battle the day after Operation al-Aqsa Flood. Like all Lebanese, they were affected by the widespread Israeli aggression from 23/9/2024 to 27/11/2024, particularly in southern Lebanon, where most Palestinian refugees live. Israel targeted several RCs, prompting mass displacement, especially after Israeli army spokesperson Avichay Adraee, on 6/10/2024, urged residents of dozens of southern villages and towns, including the Palestinian RCs in Tyre (Rashidieh, El-Buss and Burj Shemali), to move north of the Awali River.[223]

Politically: After Operation al-Aqsa Flood began on 7 October 2023, Palestinian factions, including Hamas, PIJ, Fatah and the PLO's PFLP launched attacks against Israel from Lebanese territory,[224] raising fears in Lebanon of a repeat of the 1982 Israeli invasion. Following the Hizbullah-Israel ceasefire in November 2024, focus turned to Palestinian arms in Lebanon, as leaked terms of the agreement required Lebanon to ensure border calm and prevent Palestinian groups from resuming rocket attacks.[225]

The regulation of Palestinian weapons in the RCs gained greater political significance following PA President 'Abbas's three-day visit to Beirut on 21/5/2025. A joint statement with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun affirmed the monopoly of arms by the Lebanese state, the end of any unauthorized armed presence (including in the RCs), and the prevention of using Lebanese territory as a base for military operations."[226]

During the first meeting of the joint committee overseeing Palestinian RCs in Lebanon, established on 21/5/2025, participants agreed on a phased disarmament process. Weapon withdrawals were set to begin in mid-June 2025, starting with

the Beirut RCs and then extending to others.[227] In implementation, Fatah-National Security Forces handed over their heavy and medium weapons from within the RCs in four phases.[228] Earlier, factions loyal to the former Syrian regime, including Fatah al-Intifadah and the PFLP-GC, had voluntarily surrendered weapons outside the RCs to LAF.[229]

Conversely, the Palestinian Forces Alliance, led by Hamas, argues that arms regulation in the RCs must be addressed comprehensively. Weapons should be managed by the "Joint Security Force" under the supervision of the "Palestinian Joint Action Commission," which Hamas and other factions regard as the sole authority for disarmament and other refugee-related matters, representing the largest coalition of factions both within and outside the PLO.[230]

Hamas and other factions refuse to disarm in the Lebanese RCs for several reasons. First, Palestinian weapons are seen as necessary to protect Palestinians from Israeli attacks or internal threats until the Lebanese state can ensure their security,[231] especially given historical traumas such as the massacres of Tel al-Za'tar, Sabra and Shatila.[232] Second, Iran and Hizbullah likely share the view that disarming Palestinians would embolden the Lebanese government to push for Hizbullah's complete disarmament as well.[233] Third, Hamas fears that giving up its arms in Lebanon could pave the way for similar pressures in GS.

Amid Hamas's and other Palestinian factions' refusal to disarm, media reports suggest that Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam is seeking to reorganize the Palestinian presence in Lebanon under the so-called "eight provisions." Key measures reportedly include designating armed individuals who refuse to surrender their weapons as judicially wanted, establishing a PA-affiliated security force to coordinate with LAF in disarmament operations inside and outside the RCs, and conditioning PA financial and service assistance, amid UNRWA's decline, on compliance with the disarmament plan while excluding those who refuse.[234]

b. Relations with Israel

On the Military Level

Although Hizbullah denied prior knowledge of or involvement in Operation al-Aqsa Flood,[235] led by Hamas against Israel on 7 October 2023, its swift and direct engagement in the ensuing war between Hamas and other Palestinian resistance forces, on the one hand, and Israel, on the other, was widely recognized.

This response reflected its alignment with the so-called "Axis of Resistance" and its status as the bloc's most powerful military force after Iran.[236] Furthermore, Hizbullah appears to have viewed the war as an opportunity to rebuild its standing among Lebanese and Arab public opinion after the reputational damage caused by its support for Bashar al-Assad's regime in Damascus.[237]

Military confrontations between Israel and Hizbullah in Lebanon began after Hizbullah announced the opening of a "support front" for the GS the day following Operation al-Aqsa Flood. One year into its assault on the GS, Israel intensified military pressure on Hizbullah to shift the balance of confrontation.[238] On 18/9/2024, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant announced that the war's "center of gravity is moving north. We are diverting forces, resources, and energy toward the north."[239] Israel carried out coordinated explosions of pagers and walkie-talkies held by thousands of Hizbullah commanders and members on 17–18/9/2024, killing 42 and wounding almost 3,500.[240]

On 23/9/2024, Israel launched Operation Northern Arrows, the most intense aerial campaign in Lebanon since the July 2006 war.[241] The strikes targeted Hizbullah's weapons and ammunition depots, rocket and artillery launch platforms, and first- and second-tier leadership, including Secretary-General Hasan Nasrallah, who was assassinated on 27/9/2024.[242] On 1/10/2024, Israel began a ground incursion into Hizbullah's border positions in southern Lebanon.[243] The confrontations left approximately 4 thousand Lebanese and more than 100 Israelis dead, and displaced around 60 thousand Israelis and over one million Lebanese.[244]

Despite the ceasefire between Lebanon and Israel brokered by the US and France on 26/11/2024,[245] Israel continued ground incursions and air raids, recording over 7,500 aerial and roughly 2,500 ground violations north of the Blue Line (within Lebanese territory).[246] Israel has also delayed completing its withdrawal from southern Lebanon, retaining control over five strategic sites along the Blue Line: Hamames Hill, Nabi 'Uwaydah Hill (Mount al-Deir), Mount Blat, Labbuneh, and al-'Aziyyeh Hill.[247]

According to some reports, Israel seeks to partition southern Lebanon along the Litani River into three distinct zones. The first, the Blue Line, would remain unchanged. The second, referred to as the "Red Line," would serve as a security zone in which Israel aims to maintain a military and security presence, covering

areas it still occupies with established installations and fortifications. The third, the "Green Line," is envisioned as a buffer or economic zone under US guidance, subject to specific restrictions on residents and entrants, potentially encompassing extensive residential areas where inhabitants might be denied the right of return.[248]

To address this issue, the US Ambassador to Türkiye and Special Envoy for Syria and Lebanon, Tom Barrack, presented during his first visit to Beirut on 19/6/2025, a six-page paper demanding the complete disarmament of Hizbullah and all other resistance factions in Lebanon by the end of 2025. On 3/8/2025, he submitted the final approved version, titled "Consolidating the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement," to the Lebanese government after a series of exchanges. The paper set a 120-day, four-phase timetable for Hizbullah's disarmament and LAF's deployment in the south, in exchange for Israel's cessation of raids and gradual withdrawal from occupied areas.[249]

On 5/8/2025, the Lebanese Council of Ministers tasked the army with preparing a plan to inventory all armed groups' weapons, including Hizbullah's, by the end of 2025.[250] On 7/8/2025, it approved the US plan consolidating the ceasefire with Israel and setting a timetable for Hizbullah's disarmament.[251] In September 2025, the Lebanese government adopted a five-phase army plan to centralize arms under state control and disarm Hizbullah. The first phase, lasting three months until the end of November 2025, targeted the complete removal of weapons south of the Litani River, while the remaining phases would cover the rest of Lebanon, including Beirut and the Beqaa Valley, without fixed deadlines.[252]

Hizbullah and its Secretary-General, Sheikh Naim Qassem, repeatedly criticized the government's efforts to disarm the group, arguing that such demands serve Israel's agenda.[253] Qassem warned that the Lebanese government would be "fully responsible for any internal unrest or destruction" if it pursued disarmament.[254] He set out four priorities the Lebanese government must address before any discussion of Hizbullah's weapons: stopping Israeli strikes despite the ceasefire, securing Israel's withdrawal from occupied areas in Lebanon and the five hills captured in the last war, releasing prisoners taken during the conflict, and initiating the reconstruction of war-damaged areas.[255] Hizbullah stressed that the question of exclusive armament is not subject to foreign pressure or Israeli coercion but must be resolved nationally within a comprehensive strategy for security, defense, and the safeguarding of national sovereignty.[256]

Given Hizbullah's firm refusal to surrender its arms, the Lebanese government seems hesitant to use force to enforce the state's monopoly on weapons, fearing a potential civil war.[257] Israel viewed this hesitation as a retreat from Lebanon's decision to disarm Hizbullah,[258] prompting an escalation in Israeli threats of a renewed military campaign should Hizbullah fail to relinquish its weapons by the end of 2025.[259] This subsequently materialized in late February 2026, as Israel launched a renewed large-scale offensive, sought to expand its occupied areas in southern Lebanon, and hostilities with Hizbullah resumed.

On the Political Level

In parallel with the military and political efforts surrounding Hizbullah's disarmament, a separate diplomatic dispute emerged between Lebanon and Israel over ending the mandate of the UNIFIL, established under UNSC Resolutions 425 and 426 of 19/3/1978. On 19/8/2025, Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar wrote to US Secretary of State Marco Rubio calling for the termination of UNIFIL's mission, arguing that it had "failed in its fundamental task – to prevent Hezbollah's entrenchment south of the Litani River."[260] While Israel accused UNIFIL of failing to curb arms smuggling along the border, Lebanon, backed by the international community, maintained that its mandate is limited to monitoring and support rather than direct intervention.[261] Although the force does not prevent Israeli attacks, it has been viewed as the UN witness to Israel's violations of the ceasefire and UNSC Resolution 1701.[262] Lebanese President Joseph Aoun therefore reaffirmed his country's commitment to maintaining UNIFIL until Resolution 1701 is fully implemented and LAF's deployment to the international border is completed.[263] Consequently, on 28/8/2025, the UNSC unanimously adopted a resolution extending UNIFIL's mandate for a final term until 31/12/2026.[264]

Meanwhile, regarding developments in the normalization file, the official Lebanese position rejecting normalization with Israel appears unchanged,[265] although the rhetoric has grown more conciliatory and diplomatic. This shift has been reflected in references to a comprehensive "peace," the "Arab Peace Initiative," Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, cooperation with the US, avoidance of military confrontation with Israel, and positive official engagement with collecting the resistance's weapons. A symbolic yet meaningful step came in December 2025, when President General Joseph Aoun appointed a civilian figure, the former ambassador and lawyer Simon Karam, to head the Lebanese

delegation at meetings of the Ceasefire Monitoring Committee with Israel. The presidency noted that the move responded to the appreciated efforts of the US government, which chairs the five-party committee (Lebanon, France, Israel, the US and UNIFIL).[266]

For its part, the office of the Israeli Prime Minister announced that Benjamin Netanyahu had has instructed the Acting Director of the National Security Council (NSC) to send a representative on his behalf (Senior director for foreign policy at the NSC Uri Resnick), describing the meeting with Lebanese officials as "an initial attempt to establish a basis for a relationship and economic cooperation between Israel and Lebanon."[267]

5. KSA and the Gulf States

Gulf states' positions toward the Palestine issue in general, and Israel's war on GS in particular, are shaped by several key considerations, most notably:

- Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states regard the continuation of the war on the GS as a serious threat to regional stability and a potential trigger for wider escalation, particularly involving Iran, Hizbullah and the Houthis. Indeed, this risk materialized in the large-scale Israeli-US attack on Iran in late February 2026 and the ensuing Iranian responses.
- Gulf states seek to balance their support for the Palestine issue with their long-standing strategic ties to the US and Western countries aligned with Israel.[268]
- Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain share a negative security outlook toward armed factions aligned with the Iran-led Axis of Resistance, including Palestinian groups such as Hamas and PIJ. They also view "political Islam" unfavorably, particularly given Hamas's ideological ties to the MB Movement. By contrast, Qatar hosts Hamas leaders and has been the largest donor of aid to GS since Hamas's takeover in June 2007.[269] Consequently, Qatar's mediation role expanded in both Hamas-Fatah reconciliation and ceasefire arrangements between the movement and Israel.[270] In addition, Qatar maintains strong relations with Iran and the MB Movement; notably, these ties were among the key drivers of the Gulf crisis that began in June 2017 between Qatar on one side and Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt on the other.[271]
- Gulf states differ in their stance on normalization with Israel. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are the only Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members with no formal relations, whereas the UAE and Bahrain maintain full diplomatic, economic and

cultural ties under the 2020 Abraham Accords. Qatar and Oman, by contrast, keep limited coordination channels without formal relations.[272]

- The Gulf states, among the wealthiest in the Arab world due to their oil resources, wield the greatest influence over aid and reconstruction efforts in the WB and GS.

In light of these factors, the Gulf states' stance and actions on the Palestine issue during 2024–2025 were as follows:

a. Position on the Peace Process and the PA

At the 45th and 46th Gulf Summits, held in December 2024 and December 2025 respectively, the GCC states reaffirmed their support for the Palestinians' right to an independent state along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and for the implementation of a two-state solution.[273]

Saudi Arabia, through Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman[274] and the Foreign Ministry,[275] has reaffirmed that it will not establish diplomatic relations with Israel without the establishment of a Palestinian state. The Kingdom also plays a crucial role in financially supporting the PA, particularly amid its severe fiscal crisis caused by Israel withholding tax revenues, which constitute 68% of the PA's budget. In this context, Saudi Arabia provided a $90 million grant to the Palestinian treasury in early December 2025.[276] Moreover, Saudi Arabia has been instrumental in persuading several European countries and traditional allies of Israel, including France, the UK, Canada and Australia, to recognize Palestine and endorse the two-state solution.[277] In partnership with France, Saudi Arabia co-chaired the "High-Level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution" at UN headquarters in New York on 28–29/7/2025. The conference's final statement, the New York Declaration, called for "taking tangible, timebound, and irreversible steps for the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine." Participants agreed "to take collective action… to achieve a just, peaceful and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the effective implementation of the two-State solution."[278]

For its part, the UAE has articulated a vision for resolving the Palestine issue and shaping GS after the war based on several pillars: advancing the two-state solution through the establishment of an independent Palestinian state living in "peace and

security" alongside Israel; laying the foundations for a competent government that would pave the way for the unification of the WB and GS under a single, legitimate PA (The UAE holds the view that the new prime minister, Mohammad Mustafa, appointed by President Mahmud 'Abbas in March 2024 to succeed Mohammad Shtayyeh, lacks the independence and capability to implement the necessary reforms);[279] and halting settlement construction and violence in the WB and East Jerusalem.[280] Moreover, a Middle East Eye report indicated that the US, Israel, and the UAE are cooperating to establish a post-war governing body for GS, known as the "National Committee," composed of Palestinian business figures and leaders, many reportedly loyal to former Fatah leader Mohammed Dahlan, who could eventually be installed as a successor to President Mahmud 'Abbas.[281]

Qatar has reiterated that the only path to stability and prosperity in the region is through a comprehensive, just solution to the Palestine issue based on international law, UN resolutions, the end of occupation, the cessation of settlement activities and the affirmation of the two-state solution based on the 1967 borders. It stressed the need to renew international efforts to ensure the fair and rightful step of accepting Palestine as a full member state of the UN.[282]

b. The Position on the Resistance Project and Hamas

According to Israeli media reports, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have declined to assume a central role in the post-war phase or in implementing Trump's plan to end the war in GS, including participation in security forces, civil administration, and reconstruction financing, "unless it is guaranteed that Hamas will not be part of the governing body and will surrender its weapons." Furthermore, Saudi Arabia has conditioned its involvement on the early participation of the PA in reconstruction and its assumption of governmental authority. In contrast, Qatar has maintained that "Hamas has the right to participate in Palestinian governance. not just in Gaza's security forces but also in the broader political system."[283]

During the war, Qatar's Al Jazeera served as the main outlet reporting on the Palestinian situation, exposing Israeli aggression in GS and the WB, and broadcasting Hamas materials and supportive analyses,[284]prompting Israel to close its offices in the country.[285] In contrast, Saudi and UAE media, including Al Arabiya, Al Hadath, and Sky News Arabia (owned by Saudi Arabia and the UAE), took a hostile stance toward Hamas and Operation al-Aqsa Flood,[286] leading GS Government Media Office to accuse them of echoing Israel's war narrative.[287]

Qatar has distinguished itself among Gulf states by hosting members of Hamas's political bureau since 2012, a stance that exposed it to sustained Israeli and US pressure following Operation al-Aqsa Flood on October 7, 2023. In the aftermath, Israel launched a coordinated media and diplomatic campaign aimed at Qatar, emphasizing the financial aid it provided to Gaza's population and alleging that part of these funds was diverted to support Hamas's tunnel infrastructure.[288] These pressures reached their peak with an Israeli strike on Qatar on 9/9/2025, targeting the Hamas negotiating delegation in an operation code-named "Summit of Fire."[289] Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu defended the strike, asserting that it "was entirely justified" as it targeted senior Hamas leaders responsible for the October 7 attacks and because Qatar "is tied to Hamas" and "It strengthens Hamas. It hosts Hamas. It funds Hamas."[290] Qatar, however, countered that its hosting of Hamas leadership had been conducted with the knowledge and acquiescence of the US administration, underscoring its critical and constructive role in mediation efforts, ceasefire initiatives, and the pursuit of a just "peace" in the Middle East.

The Israeli targeting of a Hamas delegation in Qatar has revived debate over Doha's continued hosting of leaders from Hamas, raising the question of whether this presence constitutes a source of diplomatic leverage, given that it remains Qatar's principal asset for mediating the Palestine issue and sustaining a distinctive regional role, or, alternatively, a direct security liability.[291] The continued residence of Hamas Political Bureau figures in Doha, and the movement's maintenance of its current level of relations with Qatar, appears to be closely linked to Doha's constructive engagement with the full spectrum of Palestinian actors, including the leaderships of PLO, PA, Fatah and other factions, as well as its comparatively open approach toward "political Islam" and resistance movements. Accordingly, Qatar is likely to sustain its established policy unless subjected to exceptional pressure from the US; as of this writing, there has been no absolute US objection to Hamas's presence in Doha. Furthermore, Qatar's relationship with Hamas is closely tied to post-war scenarios and to the movement's prospective role in the future of GS and the Palestine issue more broadly. This trajectory would be reinforced should regional and international understandings emerge that preserve a role for Hamas in administering GS or participating in the Palestinian political system.[292] It is also important to recognize that Hamas retains a broad popular base and considerable factional and political weight that cannot be overlooked.

Significantly, the Grand Mufti of the Sultanate of Oman, Sheikh Ahmad al-Khalili, adopted positions supportive of the resistance. On the very day of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, 7/10/2023, he issued his first statement via his account on the X platform, declaring: "May Allah grant success to the valiant Palestinian resistance in defending its legitimate rights and in its steadfast confrontation with the brutal occupying enemy." Moreover, in a speech delivered on his behalf by his son, Sheikh Aflah, at the Islamic Summit Conference, al-Khalili further urged the Islamic community "to spare no effort in strengthening the resistance and to welcome all who support it."[293] Al-Khalili compared Israel's war on GS to the Battle of al-Ahzab (the Battle of the Trench). In a post on the X platform, he argued that what is befalling "our brothers in the Gaza as a result of Zionist criminality, supported by tyrannical states, closely mirrors the circumstances of the Battle of al-Ahzab." Furthermore, he contended that "today's hypocrites closely resemble those of the past, and just as the ranks were clearly distinguished in that difficult moment, so too are they today, with *Allah* fully aware of those who falter….. Yet, no matter how the enemies unite, the sincere believer remains certain of *Allah*'s victory."[294]

Moreover, such positions may help explain why fighters from Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, raised Khalili's image during the handover of the bodies of Israeli captives.[295]

c. Position on Israel's War on GS

Among the Gulf states, Qatar assumed the most prominent political role during the war, acting, alongside Egypt and the US, as a mediator between Israel and Hamas, owing to its established ties with Hamas. This mediation successfully secured ceasefire agreements, facilitated the delivery of aid to GS, and enabled prisoner exchanges between the parties, most notably in January[296] and October 2025.[297]

In a joint statement with the foreign ministers of five Arab and Muslim countries (Jordan, Egypt, Türkiye, Indonesia, and Pakistan), Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar welcomed the invitation extended by US President Donald Trump to join BoP.[298] Furthermore, Ali al-Thawadi, Minister at the Qatari Prime Minister's Office for Strategic Affairs, and Reem Al Hashimi, UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation, were appointed to the Gaza Executive Board,[299] notwithstanding

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's objection to Qatar's participation in the body.[300]

On the humanitarian front, several Arab states have extended diverse forms of assistance to the Palestinian people. For instance, the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre launched a public campaign in November 2023, raising over 745 million Saudi riyals (about $199 million) by February 2026.[301] Moreover, the UAE's Operation Chivalrous Knight 3 has continued to provide extensive humanitarian assistance, including the establishment of water desalination plants in Egyptian Rafah with a combined daily capacity of two million gallons (about 7.6 million liters).[302]

Qatari relief efforts have likewise persisted. By 7/2/2025, it had supplied approximately 12.5 million liters of fuel to sustain hospitals, power generators and other essential services.[303] Moreover, on 26/9/2024, it announced a $100 million to address broader humanitarian needs in GS, including support for UNRWA.[304]

Meanwhile, on 6/8/2025, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Social Affairs reported that the final proceeds of the three-day campaign "Kuwait By Your Side – A Response to Gaza" raised a total of $37.6 million.[305] The Oman Charitable Organization reported that, since the onset of Israel's assault on GS and through July 2025, it had organized 16 direct airlifts to Egypt and Jordan transporting medical and relief supplies, while also receiving the first group of war-injured Palestinians for treatment in Oman.[306] In March 2024, the Royal Humanitarian Foundation (RHF) and the Bahrain Defence Force (BDF) in cooperation with the Royal Jordanian Air Force announced a joint operation to deliver humanitarian aid to the Palestinian population in the GS.[307] These initiatives complement the ongoing relief and humanitarian activities of numerous charitable organizations, particularly those based in Kuwait and Qatar.

Domestically, the Monitor of Hajj and Umrah Violations condemned the Saudi authorities' intensified arrests of pilgrims solely for demonstrating solidarity with the Palestine issue through the display of Palestinian flags.[308] Likewise, government authorities in the UAE and Saudi Arabia strictly prohibit any events, protests, or public demonstrations in support of the GS or in opposition to Israel.[309] In a similar vein, Bahraini security authorities have suspended the organization of weekly solidarity events and demonstrations for Palestine, citing an official government directive as justification.[310]

d. Relations with Israel and Developments in Normalization

Political and Diplomatic Aspects

Despite statements from the US, under both former President Joe Biden[311] and current President Donald Trump,[312] indicating progress toward normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia, Riyadh has consistently reaffirmed that the establishment of a Palestinian state remains a prerequisite for diplomatic relations with Israel.[313] Analyses suggest that, while Saudi Arabia does not fundamentally oppose normalization, it seeks three key concessions from the US in exchange: authorization to construct a civilian nuclear reactor with domestically enriched uranium, approval to acquire advanced weaponry such as F-35 fighter jets, and the conclusion of a joint defense agreement ratified by Congress, obligating the US to defend Saudi Arabia in the event of an external threat. Simultaneously, Saudi Arabia has required Israel to commit to a process leading to a two-state solution, entailing the establishment of a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital within three to five years, a freeze on settlement activity in the occupied territories, and the withdrawal of the Israeli army from the GS.[314] Given the Netanyahu government's steadfast opposition to the establishment of a Palestinian state and the Israeli Knesset's overwhelming vote on 17/7/2024,[315] against such a state, prospects for normalization between the two countries in the near term have become highly unlikely. The US appears to have acknowledged this reality, setting aside the prior requirement of normalization with Israel and instead pursuing bilateral agreements to accommodate Saudi demands.[316] In November 2025, President Trump authorized the sale of F-35 aircraft to Saudi Arabia, designated the kingdom as a "major non-NATO ally," and confirmed the potential for a civil nuclear agreement.[317] Taken together, these developments indicate that, while Saudi Arabia currently refrains from establishing formal political ties with Israel, nevertheless, it does not preclude limited forms of coordination and communication, as will be further discussed.

Qatar's stance aligned with that of Saudi Arabia in conditioning normalization with Israel on the establishment of a Palestinian state.[318] Between 2024 and 2025, tensions between Qatar and Israel intensified, culminating in the Israeli aggression against Qatar in September 2025. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that "There is currently an attempt to impose a blockade on Israel by various entities and countries, led by Qatar," adding, "This includes, first and

foremost, a media blockade funded by vast sums of money from Qatar and other countries, such as China."[319]

In response, Qatar encouraged Arab and Muslim countries to reassess their diplomatic and economic ties with Israel and pursue legal measures against it.[320] The US swiftly intervened to ease the dispute: the White House reported that "President Donald J. Trump hosted a trilateral phone call with His Excellency Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and His Excellency Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani of Qatar," where "the leaders accepted the president's proposal to establish a trilateral mechanism to enhance coordination, improve communication, resolve mutual grievances." It added, "As a first step, Prime Minister Netanyahu expressed his deep regret" that "Israel violated Qatari sovereignty and affirmed that Israel will not conduct such an attack again in the future."[321]

Among all Gulf states, Kuwait maintains the most stringent stance regarding normalization with Israel. In August 2025, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior reiterated that "the State of Kuwait does not impose any restrictions on the entry of citizens of any nationality into its territory, with the sole exception of Israeli nationals."[322]

The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman for Political Affairs, Khalifa bin Ali bin Issa Al Harthy, stated, according to the Russian Sputnik Agency, that Oman has no intention of normalizing relations with Israel. Commenting on normalization, he added, "Israel exploited it to abuse the Palestinians, procrastinate and delay, without giving them their rights to establish their independent state."[323]

By contrast, diplomatic engagement between the UAE and Israel proceeded uninterrupted throughout 2024–2025. In November 2024, Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi, Chairman of the UAE Federal National Council's Committee on Defense, Interior and Foreign Affairs, visited Israel to convey condolences to the family of Rabbi Zvi Kogan, who had been killed in the UAE.[324] Subsequently, in March 2025, the UAE hosted several heads of Israeli settlements, at a time when Israel was moving toward the annexation of WB.[325] In addition, two meetings took place in the UAE between the Emirati Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and his Israeli counterpart, Gideon Sa'ar, the first in January 2025[326] and the second in April 2025.[327] Notably, when the UAE requested that Israel withdraw its

ambassador to Abu Dhabi, Yossi Shelley, this was not in response to Israel's war on GS. Rather, it followed an incident in an Abu Dhabi bar, in which, according to Emirati authorities, he acted in an "undignified" manner and crossed "a huge red line in a place like Abu Dhabi." [328]

With regard to Bahrain, in October 2025, the newly appointed Israeli ambassador to Manama, Shmuel Revel, formally presented his credentials to King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. This development followed Bahrain's earlier announcement, in November 2023, that its ambassador to Israel had returned home "in support of the Palestine issue," concomitant with the departure of the Israeli ambassador.[329]

Trade and Economic Relations

The UAE accounted for about 70.4% of Arab states' trade with Israel in 2025, a share it had largely sustained over 2023–2024. According to CBS, UAE-Israel trade relations continued to expand. Israeli exports to the UAE reached about $634 million in 2025, compared to about $501 million in 2024, whereas it was $627 million in 2023. Israeli imports from the UAE increased to roughly $2,575 million in 2025, up from around $2,316 million in 2023 (see table 1/6).

Amid the blockade imposed by Ansar Allah (Houthis) on Israeli-linked vessels transiting the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab Strait, the UAE played a central role by establishing "an overland logistics corridor from Dubai to Tel Aviv via Saudi Arabia and Jordan, and Bahrain repurposed its ports to serve as alternate shipping hubs for Israeli goods arriving from India and China."[330]

Security and Military Relations

In April 2024, unverified reports have circulated suggesting potential Gulf cooperation in intercepting the Iranian attack,[331] as well as in the provision of fuel to Israel.[332] Concurrently, the Israeli Air Force participated in the annual Iniochos exercises in Greece alongside 11 other countries, including the UAE and Qatar.[333] In June 2025, the Israeli Ministry of Defense reported that Israel's military-industrial exports reached approximately $14.7 billion in 2024, with 12% of these contracts concluded with Arab states under the Abraham Accords, such as the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco.[334]

The Israeli strike on Doha on 9/9/2025[335] constituted a watershed in Gulf-Israeli relations. In Gulf strategic assessments, Israel consequently shifted from being

viewed as a potentially reliable security partner against Iran to being perceived as a direct and enduring source of threat. More broadly, these developments, together with Israel's pattern of regional assertiveness, prompted Gulf states to recalibrate their defense posture, strengthening cooperation in response to Israel rather than in coordination with it, particularly as US security guarantees appeared increasingly inadequate.[336] In this context, the Gulf response was both prompt and resolute. The GCC Joint Defense Council convened an extraordinary session in Doha and resolved to "increase the exchange of intelligence information," "accelerate the work of the Gulf Joint Task Force for the Early Warning System against Ballistic Missiles," "conduct joint exercises between air operation centers and air defense forces," and "link defence systems to confront all risks and challenges."[337] The GCC Secretary-General, Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi, further indicated that the six member states "have been weighing a unified missile defense system," including "creating a joint missile shield to counter attacks on their territory."[338]

6. Iraq

Since the outset of the war in GS, the government of Iraqi Prime Minister Muhammad Shia' al-Sudani sought to respond in a conventional manner, expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people while refraining from military involvement.[339] This approach aimed to balance Iraq's security and economic ties with the US against the political, religious and military influence Iran exerts over many Iraqi political forces and armed factions.[340] Consequently, the Iraqi government concentrated on providing financial and humanitarian aid and filing complaints with the UNSC condemning Israel's violations of Iraqi airspace.[341] At the same time, Iraq maintained a firm stance against normalization with Israel, voiced reservations over LAS summit resolutions, particularly references to the "two-state solution" and "East Jerusalem,"[342] and insisted that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu be excluded from the Sharm El-Sheikh Summit on GS on 13/10/2025.[343]

Nevertheless, Iraqi factions largely disregarded the government's political considerations. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, which encompasses Kata'ib Hizbullah, Harakat Hizbullah al-Nujaba, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), Tashkil Al-Warithin, and Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada',[344] carried out 623 attacks by 24/11/2024: 90 in Iraq, 331 in Israel, 90 in Syria, and 9 at sea.[345] Notable operations included the "Tower 22" strike in Jordan in late January 2024, which killed three

US soldiers and wounded dozens,[346] and an early October 2024 attack on an Israeli military base in the occupied Golan, resulting in two Israeli fatalities and over twenty injuries.[347]

Since November 2024, Iraqi factions have ceased their operations against Israel without issuing any formal announcement. This development coincided with the ceasefire between Israel and Hizbullah in Lebanon, as well as with the temporary truce between Israel and Hamas in January 2025. Notably, however, the Iraqi factions did not resume their operations when Israel returned to the war on GS following the collapse of the truce in March 2025.[348] This restraint may be explained, at least in part, by the Israeli warning issued on 18/11/2024, when Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar addressed a letter to the UNSC affirming Israel's right to self-defense should the Iraqi government prove unable or unwilling to restrain armed groups from attacking Israel.[349] This was accompanied by repeated Israeli violations of Iraqi airspace, apparently intended to signal to Iraqi armed factions that they had come within Israel's operational reach.[350] In addition, the US pressured Prime Minister Muhammad Shia' al-Sudani to curb attacks by Iraqi factions.[351]

Despite the cessation of attacks, Israel continues to threaten strikes within Iraq, citing the need to neutralize these groups' strategic capabilities, including drones and medium- and long-range missiles,[352] as well as the presence of Hamas and Houthi offices in Baghdad.[353] It further justifies potential operations by asserting that Iran is shifting its military focus from Lebanon, Syria and GS to Iraq in preparation for a possible confrontation.[354]

7. Yemen

Since the Palestinian resistance carried out its military operation in the GS perimeter on 7/10/2023, Operation al-Aqsa Flood, followed by Israel's counter-operation Operation Iron Swords, Ansar Allah (the Houthis) contributed to supporting GS over the ensuing two years in several ways:

a. Conducting a sustained series of missile and unmanned combat aerial vehicle attacks targeting Israel's interior, its ports on the Red Sea (Eilat) and the Mediterranean (Ashdod and Haifa), and Ben Gurion Airport.[355]

b. They established a maritime blockade by targeting shipping bound for Israel in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, striking both Israeli vessels and foreign ships

calling at its ports.[356] This prompted the Israeli Administration of Shipping and Ports (ASP) to suspend operations at the Port of Eilat.[357]

The key distinction between Ansar Allah (the Houthis) and other groups within the Axis of Resistance, particularly Lebanese Hizbullah and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, lies in the fact that the Houthis' military capabilities are essentially state-level. Furthermore, Yemen's strategic position adjacent to the Bab al-Mandab Strait enabled them to exert a highly significant maritime influence on the movement of Israeli and allied vessels. Overall, the Houthis emerge as the most active and influential actors within the Axis of Resistance.[358]

c. Efforts were made to impose a comprehensive aerial blockade on Israel through repeated strikes on airports, particularly Ben Gurion International Airport, prompting several international airlines to suspend or cancel flights to Tel Aviv.[359]

In this context, 'Abdul Malik al-Houthi, leader of the Ansar Allah movement, stated that they had carried out 1,679 military operations from the outset of support for GS until early May 2025, involving rockets, drones and naval craft. He also stated that Yemen had been subjected to 2,843 air and naval strikes, resulting in hundreds of deaths and injuries.[360]

Since the announcement of the ceasefire in GS on 10/10/2025, Ansar Allah has not claimed responsibility for any new attacks against Israel. On 10/11/2025, Ansar Allah sent a message to the Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, indicating a suspension of their attacks on Israel and on ships in the Red Sea. The message emphasized that they were closely monitoring developments and stated that "if the enemy resumes its aggression against Gaza, we will resume our military operations," while maintaining a blockade on Israeli navigation in the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea.[361]

Meanwhile, Israel assumed a defensive stance in response to rocket attacks from the Ansar Allah movement since October 2023, focusing on intercepting Yemeni rockets and drones while coordinating with the US to neutralize threats directed at its territory.[362]

Direct US and UK intervention in Yemen commenced on 12/1/2024, with the US pursuing a twofold strategy: an international naval defense initiative, Operation Prosperity Guardian, involving 20 countries, alongside two air campaigns. The first campaign, Operation Poseidon Archer, conducted between 12/1/2024 and

17/1/2025 during Joe Biden's administration in coordination with six states, and the second, Operation Rough Rider, executed from 15/3/2025 to 6/5/2025 under Donald Trump, both aimed to degrade the military capabilities of Ansar Allah. Together, these operations comprised 774 airstrikes, resulting in 550 fatalities.[363]

However, following the US-Ansar Allah agreement of 6/5/2025 to halt mutual attacks in the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandab Strait, brokered by Oman,[364] Israel's strategy shifted from a largely defensive posture to a more offensive one. Notably, the agreement was limited to suspending attacks on US vessels in the Red Sea; it neither required a cessation of attacks on Israeli ships in the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea nor mandated an end to missile and drone strikes against Israel.[365] In this context, Israel moved toward preemptive and preventive strikes, while refraining from opening a sustained daily combat front with Ansar Allah.[366] Since the 6/5/2025 ceasefire, Israeli airstrikes on Yemen have continued, targeting Sanaa International Airport, the port of Hudaydah, and several key civilian facilities in and around the capital.[367] Moreover, in the first strike directly targeting political leadership, Ansar Allah announced on 30/8/2025 the killing of its prime minister, Ahmad al-Rahawi, along with nine civilian ministers, in Israeli airstrikes that struck a cabinet meeting in Sanaa.[368]

It appears that Tel Aviv has concentrated on targeting civilian, economic and service infrastructure in areas controlled by Ansar Allah. These relatively soft targets are easier to strike and costly to rehabilitate; cumulatively, such operations are intended to intensify humanitarian suffering and, over time, erode the group's supportive social base.[369] However, this approach extends beyond exerting pressure on vital sectors. It also aims to degrade the Houthis' military capabilities by disrupting energy supplies. In this regard, Israel justified its strikes on power stations by alleging their use for "military activities," and defended its attack on Sanaa International Airport on the grounds that it was used "for transferring weapons and operatives."[370] Furthermore, Tel Aviv has portrayed its attacks on the port of Hudaydah and Sanaa International Airport as necessary to sustain the naval and air blockade imposed on Ansar Allah, framing them as a direct response to the group's attempts to impose an air and maritime blockade on Israel.[371]

A comparison between the Yemeni front and the other fronts (GS, Lebanon and Iran) demonstrates a clear divergence in Israel's operational approach. In the

latter three arenas, Israel prioritized the elimination of senior political and military leadership before turning to infrastructure. In Yemen, however, it initially focused on dismantling material assets and economic infrastructure, only gradually expanding its operations to include executive-level figures. Yet it has thus far failed to reach the top tier of the leadership hierarchy,[372] notwithstanding its successful assassination of the group's Chief of General Staff, Muhammad 'Abdul Karim al-Ghamari.[373]

More broadly, Israel and its allies have been unable to neutralize the Houthi threat. This limitation stems primarily from intelligence deficiencies attributable to two interrelated factors. First, the geography of the Houthis' sphere of influence presents structural obstacles. Yemen lies beyond Israel's established surveillance zones, such as Lebanon, Syria and GS. Moreover, Israel's earlier assessment that Yemen posed a limited threat meant that no sustained intelligence infrastructure was developed there, resulting in weak human intelligence networks. The mountainous terrain of northern Yemen further provides natural concealment, reducing the effectiveness of satellite and aerial surveillance.[374] Second, Yemen's underdeveloped communications infrastructure constrains intelligence collection. Its reliance on wired networks, combined with fragile telecommunications systems and slow internet speeds, significantly hampers Israel's ability to gather actionable intelligence.[375]

Accordingly, Israel's anticipated strategy toward Yemen is likely to center on the following:

a. Intensifying Israel's intelligence-gathering operations in Yemen through several avenues:

- Establishing a new unit comprising 200 intelligence officers tasked specifically with collecting intelligence on Yemen.[376]
- Recruiting local agents through financial inducements, particularly given Yemen's severe poverty.[377] In this context, in November 2025, a court affiliated with the Ansar Allah (Houthi) movement sentenced 17 individuals to death by firing squad after convicting them of espionage on behalf of the US, Israel and Saudi Arabia.[378]
- Dismantling the military communications systems of Ansar Allah by disabling the wired and fiber-optic infrastructure across areas under their control in

Yemen. This, in turn, was intended to compel reliance on internet-based and wireless communications systems, which are more susceptible to direct interception by US spy satellites or electronic intelligence platforms installed on US warships operating in the region, thereby enhancing intelligence collection capabilities. In this light, the decision by Starlink in September 2024 to officially launch its satellite internet service in Yemen, making it the first country in the Middle East to receive the service, may be interpreted.[379]

- The recruitment of UN personnel working in Yemen. In this regard, ‘Abdul Wahid Abu Ras, Acting Foreign Minister in the Ansar Allah (Houthi) government, announced that 43 Yemeni UN employees detained by the group would be prosecuted on suspicion of links to the Israeli airstrike that assassinated Prime Minister Ahmad Ghalib al-Rahawi, appointed by Ansar Allah, along with several ministers in August 2025.[380]

b. The potential replication of Israel’s targeting of Hamas’s Political Bureau in Qatar; more specifically, the prospect that Israel may undertake similar operations against Houthi leaders residing in the Sultanate of Oman.[381]

c. Coordination with other states to counter Ansar Allah, mainly Ethiopia. On 5/5/2025, Israel’s Foreign Minister, Gideon Sa‘ar, visited Addis Ababa, stressing that “Terrorism is a shared threat to our peoples,” linking Somalia’s al-Shabaab with Ansar Allah in Yemen. An INSS paper argues that “the Houthi aggression” gives “Israel a chance to strengthen its ties with pragmatic Arab states and position itself as a stabilizing force in the region.” Given limited prospects for cooperation with Arab Red Sea states, the paper recommends exploring “alternative avenues for establishing regional partnerships or to expand the existing organizations in a way that allows for more effective action,” positioning Ethiopia as a primary candidate for collaboration.[382] In this context, Israeli officials view that the recognition of the Republic of Somaliland “secures a strategic foothold near critical shipping routes, enhancing defense against threats like Houthi attacks and Iranian influence.” In response, Ansar Allah leader ‘Abdul Malik al-Houthi asserted that any Israeli military presence in Somaliland constitutes aggression against Somalia and Yemen and would thus be considered a military target.[383]

d. Pressuring the US to intensify its measures against Ansar Allah. In this regard, the UNSC adopted a resolution by 13 votes in favor, with Russia and China

abstaining, renewing the sanctions regime (asset freeze and travel ban) for one year, until 14/11/2026. The measures apply, until November 2025, to approximately ten individuals, most of them affiliated with Ansar Allah, as well as to the group as an entity.[384]

e. Urging the US to resume strikes against Ansar Allah.[385]

It is worth noting that certain political actors opposed to Ansar Allah attempted to instrumentalize the group's involvement in supporting GS for their own political ends. In doing so, however, they appeared to converge with the Israeli narrative regarding Ansar Allah's operations. In this vein, the Chairman of the Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council, Rashad al-'Alimi, accused Ansar Allah of having brought Israel into Yemen.[386] The Yemeni government likewise called for urgent measures to counter what it described as Houthi threats to international maritime navigation.[387]

Furthermore, the Israeli newspaper *Maariv* reported that the President of the Southern Transitional Council in Yemen, Aidarus al-Zubaidi, cautioned that eliminating the Houthis was unfeasible, framing southern independence "not just as a local aspiration but as part of a wider commitment to stability in the region." He further maintained that "an independent southern Yemeni state would pave the way for entering the Abraham Accords." According to the report, an independent South Yemen could constitute a strategic ally for Israel, particularly given its strategic position overlooking the Bab al-Mandab Strait, thereby limiting Iranian influence and strengthening maritime security.[388]

8. Algeria

Algeria joined the UNSC as a non-permanent member in January 2024 for a two-year term (2024–2025). Upon assuming its seat, it promptly introduced a series of draft resolutions calling for a ceasefire in GS, an end to the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, the full, rapid, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to GS, and the release of hostages.[389] These initiatives, however, were blocked by a veto from the US.[390] Nonetheless, Algeria continued to table further draft resolutions aimed at ending the war and ultimately succeeded in securing the adoption of one resolution after the US abstained.[391]

Although Palestinian resistance factions called on Algeria to reject the US-sponsored draft resolution on GS presented to the UNSC on 17/11/2025,[392]

Algeria ultimately voted in favor.[393] In justifying this position, Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf argued that the resolution formalizes the ceasefire agreement, ensures international protection for the Palestinian people, enables unrestricted humanitarian assistance, and lays the groundwork for reconstruction in GS. He further maintained that it rejects forced displacement and Israeli plans to annex GS, and that it has the endorsement of the PA as well as Arab and Muslim countries.[394]

In contrast to its proactive engagement within the UNSC, Algeria's role at the LAS level declined noticeably. This was evident in President 'Abdelmadjid Tebboune's absence from the Arab summits convened to address the Israeli war on GS. Algeria was instead represented by the Prime Minister at the Riyadh Summit in November 2023 and by the Foreign Minister at the Bahrain Summit; by the Baghdad Summit, representation had been reduced further to Algeria's LAS delegate and its ambassador in Cairo.[395] This downgrading was justified by claims that summit decisions had become concentrated in the hands of a limited group of Arab countries; Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Egypt and Jordan.[396] It also reflected the rejection by several Arab countries of Algeria's calls for concrete and firm measures against Israel, including expelling Israeli ambassadors from Arab states that maintain relations with Israel and imposing punitive economic measures.[397]

Despite the continuation of Algerian humanitarian support to GS and extensive popular fundraising campaigns, as well as sustained media and political expressions of support for Palestine, the authorities nonetheless refused to authorize large-scale demonstrations in the capital, Algiers, in solidarity with Palestine,[398] and restricted mass mobilization. This is particularly notable given that the Algerian public was among the most responsive to Operation al-Aqsa Flood and to Palestine, within the constraints it faced.

Position Toward Israel

Algeria and South Africa have undertaken sustained diplomatic efforts to revoke Israel's observer status in the African Union. Notably, these efforts resulted in preventing an Israeli delegation from entering the conference hall during the 44th Executive Council meeting of the African Union.[399] Furthermore, the Algerian delegation succeeded in securing the removal of Israel's former foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, from the proceedings of the 10th edition of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) forum, held in Cascais, Portugal.[400] In parallel, a bloc of 60 members of the Algerian parliament introduced a bill proposing a ban on any

normalization or commercial and economic engagement between Algerian public and private companies and foreign firms that finance Israel.[401]

In 2025, Algeria witnessed significant domestic debate over normalization with Israel, sparked by two key incidents. The first occurred on 3/2/2025, when President 'Abdelmadjid Tebboune told the French newspaper *L'Opinion* that "normalization will take place 'the very day there is a Palestinian state.'"[402] This statement generated controversy, with opposition parties, particularly the Movement of Society for Peace, Algeria's largest Islamic opposition party, viewing it as a departure from previous positions. While consistent with broader Arab positions and the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, the statement represented a shift in Algerian diplomacy from outright rejection of normalization to conditional acceptance.[403]

The second incident involved Algerian MP Abdelouahab Yagoubi of the Movement of Society for Peace, who sat at the same table as an individual considered a representative of Israel during a meeting on the margins of the UNGA in New York. The party quickly disavowed his action, stressing that it "contradicts the firm positions of the Algerian state and the party regarding the central issue." MP Yagoubi, however, reaffirmed his principled opposition to normalization, noting that the meeting included no official Israeli representation and that the individual in question attended solely as a representative of the Druze community.[404]

9. Morocco

a. Development of Political Relations and Diplomatic Activities

Morocco maintained its established policy toward the Palestine issue following its normalization with Israel, reaffirming support for a two-state solution, an end to the war on GS, and adherence to the standard LAS framework.

It continued providing humanitarian aid to GS, delivering 295 tons,[405] primarily through the Bayt Mal al-Quds Asharif Agency, which implemented a prosthetics program for 23 children with amputations and supported the education sector.[406] Morocco also leveraged its ties with Israel to ensure rapid, direct delivery[407] via Ben Gurion Airport,[408] while simultaneously restricting demonstrations in solidarity with GS.[409]

Furthermore, on 19/1/2026, the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that King Mohammed VI had accepted an invitation from President Donald Trump to join, as a founding member, the BoP led by the US.[410]

b. Relations with Israel

Morocco and Sudan joined the Abraham Accords in 2020. Six other Arab African states, Algeria, the Comoros, Djibouti, Libya, Somalia, and Tunisia—have never recognized Israel, while Mauritania has suspended bilateral relations. Since the outbreak of Israel's genocidal campaign in GS and throughout the 2024–2025 war, Moroccan-Israeli ties have steadily strengthened. Military shipments to Israel through Moroccan ports, particularly via Maersk, continued uninterrupted.[411] Israel also participated in the African Lion military exercise in Morocco,[412] and the Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) signed a $1 billion contract to supply one next-generation Ofek-13 spy satellite to Morocco.[413]

Israeli reports further indicate a notable increase in Morocco's imports from Israel between 2023 and 2025, rising from about $63 million to around $116 million.[414] Furthermore, Israel appointed its first economic attaché to its office in Rabat.[415] Academically, a delegation of Moroccan "young leaders, influencers, professionals, academics and civil society activists visited Israel last week as a part of Sharaka's flagship program to promote tolerance through Holocaust education in the Arab and Muslim world,"[416] and some universities allowed Israeli citizens to enroll in master's programs.[417] Nevertheless, a broad popular current in Morocco continues to oppose normalization and expresses solidarity with the Palestinian resistance.

The formal development of relations between Morocco and Israel, not with standing the war in GS, may be attributed to several interrelated factors. Chief among these is Morocco's objective of securing US recognition of its sovereignty over Western Sahara, a recognition granted by President Donald Trump in December 2020 in exchange for Rabat's normalization of relations with Israel, which likewise acknowledged Morocco's sovereignty over the territory. Furthermore, Morocco has viewed its relationship with Israel as a means of weakening the Polisario Front by countering Iranian influence, particularly Tehran's support for the movement. At the same time, Rabat seeks to consolidate a strategic military balance with Algeria, which continues to back the Polisario Front.[418]

10. Libya

Libya remains mired in political division, with the Presidential Council exercising authority in Tripoli, while Khalifa Haftar controls eastern Libya from Benghazi.

In May 2024, the Presidential Council announced Libya's accession to South Africa's genocide case against Israel before the ICJ concerning its ongoing war on GS.[419] Libya thus became the only Arab state to take this step.

Meanwhile, Libya's Grand Mufti, Sadiq al-Ghariani, maintained that Israeli occupation can only be countered through resistance. He called for support for the Palestinian people and their resistance, urged postponing certain religious practices such as repeated '*Umrah*, and argued that funds spent on performing '*Umrah* more than once would be better directed to the people of GS and support for Palestinian resistance. He also criticized patronage of foreign restaurant chains that support Israel, asserting that such spending contributes to the killing and starvation of the population in GS.[420] By March 2024, Libyan assistance to GS had reached 1,330.5 tons.[421]

Conversely, forces affiliated with Khalifa Haftar prevented the Maghreb Sumud Convoy, intended to break the siege on GS, from transiting through Libya to Egypt, citing the participants' lack of Egyptian official approval.[422]

Several media reports further alleged that Libya had been identified as a potential destination under a plan attributed to Donald Trump to receive Palestinians displaced from GS.[423] According to Libyan sources, in exchange for resettlement, the US administration reportedly pledged to the government of 'Abdul Hamid Dbeibah the release of some $30 billion that the US froze for more than a decade.[424] It was also suggested that Khalifa Haftar would be granted "greater freedom to manage oil resources and leverage power."[425] These reports were met with categorical denials from Libyan authorities. Rejections were issued by the Libyan House of Representatives,[426] by Dbeibah as head of the Government of National Unity,[427] by the government of Usama Hammad appointed by the House of Representatives,[428] as well as by the US Embassy in Tripoli.[429]

With respect to relations with Israel, the period 2024–2025 saw renewed controversy over contacts between Israel and Libya, prompted by two principal developments. First, former Libyan Foreign Minister Najla al-Mangoush, who had served in the Government of National Unity led by 'Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, publicly commented, more than a year after her dismissal in 2023, on her meeting in Rome with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen. She stated that the meeting had been authorized by Dbeibah to discuss "strategic issues related to the security

and stability of the Mediterranean."[430] These remarks triggered protests in several Libyan cities, with demonstrators denouncing any move toward normalization with Israel. Subsequently, the chairman of the High Council of State (HCS), Khaled al-Mishri, called on the Public Prosecutor to initiate legal proceedings against Dbeibah, al-Mangoush, and all those involved in arranging the meeting with Cohen.[431]

Second, Mahmud al-Misrati, a journalist aligned with Khalifa Haftar, disclosed that he had personally attended meetings between Haftar's son, Saddam Haftar, and the Mossad. According to his account, the discussions centered on securing support to facilitate Saddam Haftar's rise to power in Libya in exchange for his father's withdrawal, an arrangement he claimed was ultimately rejected. This testimony echoed earlier reporting by the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* in 2021, which had revealed that Saddam Haftar had visited Tel Aviv to explore formal normalization in return for "military and political assistance."[432]

11. Tunisia, Sudan and Other States

Tunisia endorsed the LAS resolutions concerning the Palestine issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict, except for references to the "4 June 1967 borders," the "two-state solution," and "East Jerusalem." This position is grounded in Tunisia's longstanding and consistent support for the struggle of the Palestinian people to recover their legitimate and inalienable rights, foremost among them the establishment of an independent state over the entirety of the land of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital.[433] In his oath-taking address at Bardo Palace in October 2024, President Kais Saied stated that "the term normalization with the criminal Zionist entity does not exist in our vocabulary," adding that engaging with Israel constitutes high treason against the Palestinian right.[434] In parallel, MP Basma Hammami disclosed that parliament was preparing draft legislation to criminalize normalization with Israel.[435]

Moreover, in an effort to help break the blockade on GS, Sidi Bou Said Port hosted the Global Sumud Flotilla (GSF). Two vessels were reportedly struck by Israeli drones.[436] Tunisian aid delivered to GS up to July 2024 was estimated at approximately 1,600 tons.[437]

As for Sudan, although its relations with Israel were normalized in 2020, they did not progress in 2024–2025 as Israel had hoped. This stagnation can

be attributed both to the intensifying conflict between General 'Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, commander of the Sudanese Armed Forces, and Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti), leader of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), and to the Israeli war in GS. In this context, Sudan's Minister of Information promptly denied reports that "the Sudanese government has sent any envoy to Israel." The statement followed a claim by the Sudanese outlet al-Rakoba that Lieutenant General Al-Sadiq Ismail, personal envoy to al-Burhan in his capacity as head of the Transitional Sovereign Council, had secretly visited Israel "to coordinate with Israeli officials on presenting Burhan in a favourable light to the new US administration and to address rising tensions with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) over Burhan and the Sudanese army."[438]

Meanwhile, Sudanese criticism of Israel intensified in response to what was widely characterized domestically as a genocidal war in GS. Khartoum reaffirmed its rejection of any displacement of Palestinians. The Sudanese Foreign Minister dismissed reports regarding the resettlement of residents of GS in Sudanese territory and denied that any communications had taken place on this matter. Furthermore, the Associated Press reported that President Donald Trump's administration had initiated contacts with Khartoum concerning the possible acceptance of Palestinians, allegedly offering military assistance to support the Sudanese army against the RSF, alongside reconstruction aid and other incentives.[439]

Israel appears to favor the leader of Sudan's RSF, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti), in his confrontation with 'Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. In this context, *The Jerusalem Post* published a report characterizing al-Burhan as "a live threat" to Israel, asserting that he "is an enabler of radical Islam, an ally of Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, and most dangerously, a willing tool of Iran's expanding influence across Africa and the Middle East" through military and intelligence cooperation. The newspaper further called on the US to treat al-Burhan as an Iranian "proxy" and to impose economic sanctions.[440]

Nevertheless, Israel seeks to maintain control over the evolving dynamics in Sudan, clearly aiming to preserve influence with both sides of the conflict, al-Burhan and Hemedti. To this end, Tel Aviv has adopted a differentiated approach among its sovereign institutions: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs manages official communications with al-Burhan's camp, recognized as the legitimate representative of the Sudanese state, while Mossad oversees unofficial,

field-level contacts with Hemedti's team, including information exchanges and secret meetings reported by various media outlets over recent years. In general, Israel's objectives in Sudan are multifaceted. They include expanding normalization agreements and positioning Sudan as a key component of the Abraham Accords, given its historically firm stance of "no peace, no recognition and no negotiations" with Israel; safeguarding security and intelligence interests by preventing armed groups from exploiting instability, which could facilitate arms smuggling and support for resistance factions, thereby undermining Israel's security and increasing logistical and operational pressures; and advancing broader geopolitical aims, such as weakening Sudan and preventing its emergence as a strong, unified state, while using Sudan and control of the Nile waters as instruments to constrain and shape Egyptian political decision-making. Sudan's strategic location on the Red Sea, near the Horn of Africa, further underscores its pivotal importance in both the Middle Eastern and African spheres.[441]

The years 2024–2025 saw renewed US efforts to restore the severed relations between Mauritania and Israel, which had been suspended since 2008. The US outlet Semafor reported, citing an informed source, that the "Islamic Republic of Mauritania is set to take a step toward resuming ties with the state of Israel at a White House meeting brokered by US President Donald Trump," on 9/7/2025. According to the report, Mauritania President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani was to "meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the sidelines of a mini US-Africa summit featuring four other western African countries: Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and Senegal."[442] There is no evidence that such a meeting took place, and Nouakchott has officially denied these reports.[443] However, it remains plausible that Mauritania, along with other Arab states that have yet to normalize relations with Israel, may eventually move in that direction, particularly given the political and economic incentives extended by the US. Many of these states face structural constraints that limit their capacity to withstand US pressure. Concurrently, support for the Palestine issue has receded among several Arab regimes, for whom it no longer constitutes a central priority. Nevertheless, mindful of domestic opposition to normalization, these regimes often prefer to maintain discreet relations with Israel.[444]

In a related development, on 26/12/2025, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced Israel's "official recognition of the Republic of Somaliland as an independent and sovereign state," thereby making Israel the first country to

officially recognize the secessionist Somali region. The Prime Minister's Office stated that the declaration was jointly signed by Netanyahu, Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar, and Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi. The move was framed as "in the spirit of the Abraham Accords, signed at the initiative of President Trump." Moreover, Netanyahu's office indicated that Israel would "immediately expand its relations with the Republic of Somaliland through extensive cooperation in the fields of agriculture, health, technology, and economy." In parallel, Sa'ar confirmed that he had spoken with the Somaliland president to formalize "mutual recognition and the establishment of full diplomatic relations, which will include the appointment of ambassadors and the opening of embassies." For its part, the Government of Somaliland welcomed the recognition as a significant step toward strengthening its international legitimacy. In an official statement, it emphasized that the decision would facilitate the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel and reiterated its intention to join the Abraham Accords.[445]

In an interview with Al Jazeera, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud stated that, "according to Somali intelligence, Somaliland has accepted three Israeli conditions in exchange for Israeli recognition: the resettlement of Palestinians, the establishment of an Israeli military base on the coast of the Gulf of Aden, and Somaliland joining the Abraham Accords."[446]

Israeli Channel 12 has indicated that the US has considered Puntland, Somaliland and Morocco "for the absorption of refugee Gazans after President Donald Trump announced that the US plans to take over the Gaza Strip and relocate" the Gazans. The report noted that these countries are in "strong need for US support, as Somaliland and Puntland seek international recognition" of their sovereignty over Somali territories.[447]

In the same vein, Middle East Monitor reported that "the UAE is mediating on Israel's behalf for the establishment of a military base in Somaliland," to counter the Ansar Allah (Houthi) movement and Iran, in exchange for Israeli recognition of Somaliland as an independent state.[448] Similarly, an article in *The Jerusalem Post* stated that "the Somaliland recognition struck directly at Türkiye's sphere of influence," given Ankara's entrenched role in Somalia, where it "trains Somali forces, builds infrastructure." The article situates this development within a broader pattern that includes cooperation with Cyprus and Greece, as well as Israeli support

for the Kurds and the Druze in Syria, thereby delineating an expanding sphere of strategic rivalry between Tel Aviv and Ankara extending from the Mediterranean to Syria and the Horn of Africa. Moreover, Israel's recognition of Somaliland cannot be divorced from its so-called "Periphery Doctrine," a strategy designed to cultivate alliances with non-Arab states and minority groups in the Middle East, alongside geographically distant Arab states, with the aim of mitigating the regional isolation imposed on Israel in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict.[449]

For his part, Djibouti's Foreign Minister, Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, stated in January 2024 that "we did not condemn the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab, as we consider them legitimate relief for the Palestinians." This position signaled a comparatively advanced stance in support of the resistance and diverged from the prevailing orientation within the Arab normalization environment with Israel. Furthermore, with regard to the US-led international coalition formed to confront the Houthis, Youssouf affirmed that Djibouti had refrained from joining the Red Sea force established by Washington.[450] In the same vein, Prime Minister Abdoulkader Kamil Mohamed disclosed that his government had rejected a US request to deploy a missile platform on its territory to target the Houthis in Yemen.[451]

On 2/12/2025, the UNGA adopted a resolution calling for an end to Israel's occupation of Palestine. Sponsored by Djibouti, Jordan, Mauritania, Qatar, Senegal, and Palestine, the resolution reaffirmed the UN's responsibility toward the Palestine issue, urged the termination of Israel's occupation of the 1967 territories, and reaffirmed support for a two-state solution.[452]

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Trade relations between Israel and the Arab states that have normalized ties with it remained largely unaffected by Operation al-Aqsa Flood. Furthermore, these states did not adopt any meaningful measures or sanctions against Israel in response to its war on GS. More specifically, Israel's trade with Egypt, Jordan and Morocco exhibited a general upward trend over the period 2023–2025. Bahrain constituted a partial exception, as its exports to Israel rose sharply in 2024 before returning to prior levels. Meanwhile, the UAE accounted for about 70.4% of total Arab trade with Israel in 2025, a share it had largely maintained throughout 2023–2024.

According to the Israeli CBS, Israeli exports to Egypt increased from about $259 million in 2023 to $305 million in 2024, before falling to $203 million in 2025. In contrast, Israeli imports from Egypt grew steadily over the same period, rising from about $183 million in 2023 to $274 million in 2024 and reaching $358 million in 2025.

In the case of Jordan, Israeli exports declined to about $97 million in 2025, down from $108 million in 2024, though remaining above the $76 million recorded in 2023. In contrast, Israeli imports from Jordan increased significantly, reaching $541 million in 2025, compared to $369 million in 2024 and $372 million in 2023.

Regarding Morocco, Israeli exports rose to about $116 million in 2025, up from $95 million in 2024 and $63 million in 2023. Conversely, Israeli imports from Morocco declined to about $13 million in 2025, compared to $14 million in 2024 and $16 million in 2023.

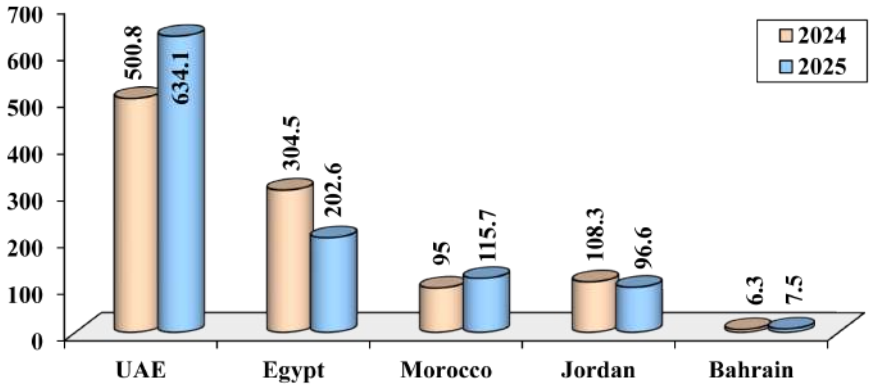
As for Bahrain, Israeli exports rose to about $8 million in 2025, up from $6 million in 2024 and around $3 million in 2023. By contrast, Israeli imports from Bahrain declined markedly to about $14 million in 2025, down from roughly $102 million in 2024, having previously stood at about $8 million in 2023.

The table below outlines Israel's trade relations with Arab countries.

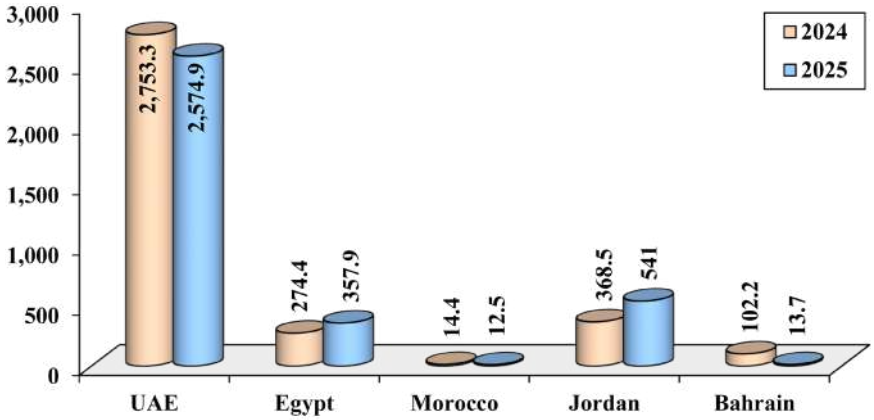
Table 1/6: Israeli Exports and Imports with Arab Countries 2023–2025 ($ million)[453]

Country	Israeli exports			Israeli imports		
	2025	2024	2023	2025	2024	2023
Egypt	202.6	304.5	258.5	357.9	274.4	182.7
Jordan	96.6	108.3	76	541	368.5	371.8
Morocco	115.7	95	62.5	12.5	14.4	16.2
UAE	634.1	500.8	626.6	2,574.9	2,753.3	2,316.3
Bahrain	7.5	6.3	3.4	13.7	102.2	8.1

Israeli Exports to Arab Countries 2024–2025 ($ million)



Israeli Imports From Arab Countries 2024–2025 ($ million)



Third: The Popular Arab Position and Its Orientations

During 2024–2025, the popular Arab reaction to Israel's war on GS manifested in multiple forms:

1. Demonstrations and Protest Rallies

Morocco led Arab countries in organizing solidarity actions, recording 10,480 protests and rallies, ranging from sit-ins to marches, between October 2023 and September 2025, according to the Moroccan Commission for Supporting the Ummah's Causes, a non-governmental organization.[454] Demonstrations organized by the "Moroccan Front for Supporting Palestine and Opposing Normalization,"

which includes several political groups, notably the opposition Justice and Spirituality Movement, condemned Israel's ongoing attacks, the continued starvation of Palestinians in GS, and the closure of crossings.[455] Much of this solidarity focused on anti-normalization efforts. Protests in Marrakech sought to prevent Israeli Transport Minister Miri Regev from participating in the "Fourth Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety" in February 2025.[456] Additional demonstrations took place at the ports of Casablanca and Tangier to block Maersk ships accused of transporting weapons and military equipment to Israel.[457]

In Tunisia, demonstrations focused on the US Embassy in Tunis, totaling 91 sit-ins by September 2025, calling for an end to the massacres of civilians in GS. Protesters voiced opposition to US President Donald Trump and expressed solidarity with GS and the Palestinian resistance.[458] Concurrently, the Coordination of Joint Action for Palestine, the Tunisian Campaign Against Normalization, and other advocates of the Palestine issue in Tunisia have sought to collect one million signatures to enact a law criminalizing normalization with Israel.[459]

Libya witnessed numerous demonstrations and public vigils in solidarity with the resistance, GS and the broader Palestine issue. In particular, following statements by Najla al-Mangoush, the dismissed foreign minister of the Government of National Unity headed by 'Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, regarding her meeting in Rome in August 2023 with former Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, protests erupted in Tripoli, Misrata and Tajoura. Al-Mangoush indicated that the meeting had been arranged by the government in Tripoli, a disclosure that triggered widespread public anger. Consequently, demonstrators denounced normalization with Israel and called for an investigation into Prime Minister 'Abdul Hamid Dbeibah and other officials involved in the meeting. In Misrata, protesters escalated their demands, calling for the resignation of the government as a whole.[460] Furthermore, in response to global mobilization against the policy of starving GS, Libyans organized a protest in Algeria Square in central Tripoli. Participants raised banners demanding an end to the aggression and the opening of border crossings. The event was convened by several Libyan initiatives, including Jerusalem Is My Trust – Libya and the Alliance for Resisting Normalization, in addition to student and youth organizations.[461]

In Mauritania, numerous demonstrations and solidarity events were organized in support of the resistance and the Palestine issue. In Nouakchott, citizens took to the streets to demand an end to the genocide that Israel continues to perpetrate in

GS. These mobilizations followed calls by the "Student Initiative Against Zionist Penetration and in Defense of Just Causes." Participants, moreover, criticized "the absence of an official Arab response commensurate with the scale of the catastrophe in Gaza."[462] In addition, several protest vigils were staged in front of the US embassy in Nouakchott, drawing large crowds and calling for the "expulsion of embassies supporting the occupation from Mauritanian territory."[463]

In Jordan, mass demonstrations following Friday prayers persisted for nearly a year and a half across most cities and towns of the Kingdom, representing one of the most sustained and visible manifestations of popular engagement with Operation al-Aqsa Flood, support for the resistance, and solidarity with the Palestinian people. Over this period, thousands of protests and public events were organized. This mobilization largely responded to calls issued by the National Forum for Supporting the Resistance and Protecting the Homeland, a broad-based popular coalition comprising dozens of opposition political figures and approximately seven political parties, most notably the IAF, which represents the MB Movement. Demonstrators voiced support for the resistance and its leadership, while emphasizing the unity of destiny between Jordan and Palestine and framing support for GS as a national, pan-Arab, and humanitarian duty.[464] At the same time, protesters called for the complete severance of relations between Jordan and Israel, including the abrogation of the Wadi Araba Peace Treaty in 1994, as well as the suspension of trade exchanges, goods and agricultural imports.[465] The vicinity of the Israeli embassy in the Rabiya area of Amman became a focal point for repeated protests condemning the aggression against GS. On several occasions, demonstrators attempted to storm the embassy compound; however, security forces intervened, arresting dozens and leading to clashes between protesters and security personnel.[466]

In Syria, following the fall of al-Assad regime, public squares in most cities saw frequent demonstrations throughout the war. Participants carried Palestinian flags and images of martyrs killed by Israeli strikes on GS, denouncing Israel's crimes and urging the international community to act swiftly to end the genocidal assault on Palestinians and lift the siege of GS. Protesters across governorates stressed the importance of unified Arab and Islamic support to bolster Palestinian steadfastness against ongoing Israeli aggression, and called for Israeli leaders to be held accountable in international courts for the crimes committed in GS over the past two years.[467]

In Lebanon, both Lebanese and Palestinian communities across cities, towns and RCs, from north to south, engaged in sustained demonstrations, sit-ins, and protest vigils throughout the war. Participants displayed Palestinian and Lebanese flags, banners of resistance movements, and slogans condemning the aggression, while demanding Israel's accountability and an end to attacks on innocent civilians.[468] These protests, including widespread strikes and sit-ins, closely followed developments in GS.

The Yemeni population engaged with the GS war with notable vigor and organization, staging numerous mass rallies in Sanaa in solidarity with the Palestinian people and in support of the resistance. Hundreds of demonstrations occurred across Yemeni cities, both in areas controlled by Ansar Allah "Houthis" and under the Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council. In a notable instance, demonstrations called by the Ansar Allah leader, 'Abdul Malik al-Houthi, took place at al-Sab'een Square in the capital and spread to 800 squares designated by the Committee for Supporting Operation al-Aqsa Flood, with the largest concentrations in Hudaydah (179 squares) and Ibb (162 squares). The rallies, held under the slogan "We Stand Firm with Gaza and Palestine… Against Killers and Arrogant Powers," featured protesters waving Yemeni and Palestinian flags and displaying banners affirming unwavering solidarity with Gaza, while chanting slogans denouncing Israel and the US for its support of Tel Aviv.[469]

Throughout the two years of the war, numerous demonstrations and mass events (too many to enumerate fully in this report) took place across Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Iraq, Sudan and Somalia,… reflecting widespread Arab solidarity with Palestine and its resistance. While some Arab states, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, implemented measures to restrict popular protests, these controls did not mask the prevailing public sentiment, which remained strongly sympathetic to the Palestinian people and opposed to Israel, as confirmed by opinion polls.

An Arab public opinion survey on the Israeli war on GS, released by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies on 10/1/2024, was conducted on a sample of 8 thousand respondents (men and women) from 16 Arab countries, including Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and the WB, Palestine

(including Jerusalem). The surveyed communities represent 95% of the population of the Arab region and its far-flung regions. The findings indicate that 67% of respondents reported that the military operation carried out by Hamas was a "legitimate resistance operation," 19% reported that it was a "somewhat flawed but legitimate resistance operation," and only 5% considered it "an illegitimate operation." There was overwhelming Arab solidarity with the Palestinian people, with 92% expressing support: 69% expressing their solidarity with Palestinians and support for Hamas, 23% expressing solidarity with Palestinians despite opposing Hamas, and 1% expressing a lack of solidarity with the Palestinians. A consensus of 92% believe that the "Palestinian question concerns all Arabs and not just the Palestinians," an unprecedented increase from 76% at the end of 2022. Opposition to recognizing Israel was similarly strong, with 89% against and only 4% in favor, up from 84% in 2022. Regarding the measures Arab governments might take to halt the war, 36% stated that Arab governments should suspend all relations or normalization processes with Israel, while 14% stated that aid and support should be brought into Gaza without Israeli approval, and 11% said that the Arab governments should use oil as a weapon to assert pressure on Israel and its supporters. Meanwhile 9% believed that Arab countries should establish a global coalition to boycott Israel.[470]

2. Boycotting Companies Supporting Israel

Since the onset of the ongoing war in GS on 7/10/2023, several major global corporations openly backed Israel's military in its campaign against Palestinians, sparking widespread Arab and international outrage. This backlash materialized in extensive boycott campaigns that inflicted unprecedented losses. In many Arab countries, McDonald's sales declined by 50–90% within a month, and the company lost $7 billion in market value after its Chief Financial Officer (CFO) acknowledged the boycott's impact on Middle East sales in Q1 2024. Similarly, Starbucks reported Q2 losses in 2024, as declining revenues and profits led to a 16% drop in its share price.[471] Concurrently, Majid Al-Futtaim Group, the Arab-region franchisee of the French retailer Carrefour, shuttered stores in Jordan, Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain.[472]

The boycott extended beyond corporations to encompass Western universities implicated in supporting Israel. The Gulf Coalition Against Normalisation (Gulf CAN) launched a campaign targeting British universities involved

in backing Israeli crimes. In an official statement, the coalition stressed that the campaign targets universities that "are not only complicit in refusing to acknowledge the genocide in Gaza, but also play a direct role in financing and developing weapons supplied to the Zionist occupation army," and it also targets those complicit in "suppressing demonstrations by students demanding an end to their participation in the genocide in Gaza." The statement highlighted the pivotal role Gulf students could play, noting that Gulf "scholarship programmes and partnerships with local universities in the Gulf are an 'indispensable source of income for British universities.'" Founded in 2019, Gulf CAN is the united front of the people of the Arab Gulf that coordinates action against the Zionist project in the region. It "is composed of numerous regional organisations and working groups across the Gulf, including: BDS Kuwait, Bahrain Society Against Normalisation with the Zionist Entity, Qatar Youth Opposed Normalisation (QAYON), Youth for Quds (the Gulf Committee), amongst others."[473]

3. Convoys Breaking the Siege of GS

The GSF mobilized participants from 44 countries, totaling over a thousand activists, nearly 800 of whom belonged to the Maghreb Sumud Flotilla. GSF included individuals from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania,[474] while additional participants came from Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman,[475] and Jordan.[476] Of the 50 vessels comprising the fleet, 23 were Maghrebian.[477] Concurrently, the Maghreb Sumud Convoy, departing from Tunisia with approximately two thousand activists traveling in around 20 buses and 350 cars, sought to reach the Rafah crossing to enter GS.[478] Its progress was, however, obstructed by authorities in eastern Libya, who barred its passage toward the Musaid border crossing with Egypt.[479] Moreover, on 14/6/2025, the "Karama" solidarity convoy departed from Lebanon toward the Rafah crossing; however, it was compelled to turn back at the Lebanese-Syrian border, as Lebanese General Security denied its departure in the absence of formal authorization from the Syrian authorities.[480]

4. Pursuing Israeli Officials

The Union of Arab Jurists announced the formation of an Arab legal task force to pursue those responsible for war crimes arising from the Israeli aggression against GS and to advocate on behalf of victims of acts of genocide committed

against the Palestinian people.[481] According to Moroccan lawyer Khalid Sefiani, coordinator of the "Arab Legal Task Force for Prosecuting Israeli War Criminals," the group is preparing to file complaints before the ICC against Israeli officials, while also initiating proceedings in Arab jurisdictions where domestic legislation permits. Sefiani further indicated that Moroccan participants in GSF may seek legal recourse before Moroccan courts following their arrest and alleged torture by the Israeli army during efforts to break the naval blockade on GS. Importantly, he emphasized that the initiative extends beyond targeting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu or senior officials; rather, it encompasses all individuals implicated in crimes against Palestinians, including those who provided political, military, or diplomatic support, such as the US.[482]

In a related context, dozens of Arab journalists, media professionals and activists announced their endorsement of a "Code of Honor for the Defense of Palestine and Gaza." The signatories committed to deploying their professional expertise to counter the Israeli narrative and document ongoing violations against Palestinians. They further maintained that the struggle over narrative is no less significant than other arenas of confrontation, underscoring that independent media serves as a critical instrument in shaping public consciousness in the confrontation with Israel.[483]

5. Popular Donations

Arab societies demonstrated sustained financial solidarity with GS, whether through individual giving or organized campaigns. This pattern was evident across markedly different economic contexts. In Saudi Arabia, for example, total donations (by February 2026) exceeded 745 million riyals (more than $199 million).[484] Conversely, in a less affluent country such as Mauritania, significant public mobilization led to contributions estimated (by June 2024) at nearly $10 million, about 4 billion Mauritanian ouguiyas.[485]

6. Emotional Solidarity

It was manifested, for example, in the performance by tens of millions of the absentee funeral prayer (*Salat al-Gha'ib*) for the Head of the Hamas Political Bureau, Isma'il Haniyyah, in several Arab countries, including Yemen, Lebanon and Jordan, concurrent with the funeral prayer and burial held in Doha, Qatar.[486] Similar prayers were also held for Al-Qassam Brigades leaders: Muhammad Sinwar, Chief of General Staff; Muhammad Shabanah, the Rafah Brigade

Commander; Ḥakam al-‘Isa, Head of the Weapons and Combat Services Division; Rȧid Sa‘d, Head of Military Manufacturing; and Abu ‘Ubaida (Huthaifah al-Kahlut), former spokesperson of the Al-Qassam Brigades. These ceremonies took place in Morocco, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen.[487] This emotional solidarity was further reflected in official obituaries issued by the Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq (AMSI)[488] and the Syrian Islamic Council[489] for the Head of Hamas’s Political Bureau, Yaḥya Sinwar, who was killed during a battle with Israel’s army in Rafah, in the southern part of GS. Likewise, the Jordanian football clubs al-Faisaly and al-Wehdat, the country’s two leading teams, publicly mourned Abu ‘Ubaida (Huthaifah al-Kahlut).[490]

An examination of Arab popular engagement with the Palestine issue during 2024–2025 suggests that, despite its wide geographic spread, this popular mobilization remained largely symbolic in its overall impact. More specifically, it failed to sustain consistent momentum over time or to maintain regular weekly or monthly demonstrations in parallel with the duration of the war. Furthermore, it did not generate any substantive shift in Arab governmental positions. Instead, state policies continued to be driven by their own strategic calculations, with little discernible responsiveness to public sentiment or evolving street-level mobilization.[491] By contrast, academic and student activism across the Arab world remained minimal and, in many cases, virtually absent, while Western universities witnessed a pronounced surge in engagement.[492]

The relative weakness of Arab mobilization may be attributed primarily to the extensive use by Arab regimes of security and legal mechanisms, such as arrests and restrictive protest laws, to contain independent popular activism, even when it relates to the Palestine issue, where the enduring specter of the Arab Spring continues to shape the calculations of Arab leaderships. At the same time, wider social and cultural shifts, most notably the rise of individualism and deep immersion in digital spaces, have reduced the capacity of societies to translate emotional solidarity into sustained collective action. The Maghreb Sumud Convoy, which departed from Tunisia, passed through Algeria and Libya, and reached the Egyptian border in August 2025, illustrates these limitations. Despite its attempt to transform symbolic support into concrete engagement, the convoy was halted by security restrictions at the crossing, its participants were returned to their home countries, and it failed to generate significant grassroots engagement within Egypt. In addition, psychological and social factors, such as chronic frustration

with political action, preoccupation with daily economic pressures, and fear of punishment, have further reinforced public silence or, at best, limited direct forms of engagement.[493]

Conclusion

The Arab position during 2024–2025 remained characterized by weakness and limited effectiveness vis-à-vis the Palestine issue. However, Israel's genocidal war against GS during this period, met by sustained resistance and notable societal resilience, brought into sharper focus a critical dimension of this stance: an unprecedented level of official abandonment in the history of the conflict with the Zionist project. More specifically, certain Arab regimes were not merely passive but actively complicit. They contributed to the siege imposed on the resistance, sought to delegitimize it, curtailed popular mobilization in support of Palestine, and continued political and commercial engagement while facilitating supply channels for Israeli needs through their territories and borders.

Israeli policies of Judaization and annexation, coupled with displacement initiatives and the imposition of coercive living conditions in the WB and GS, have posed strategic risks not only to Palestine but also to the surrounding regional environment, particularly Egypt and Jordan. Accordingly, these regimes, supported by a broader Arab consensus, have adopted firm positions opposing displacement. Furthermore, the shift in Israeli security doctrine—from deterrence by threat to deterrence by destruction, including pre-emptive destruction, and toward reshaping the Arab and Muslim region in line with Israeli security standards rather than adapting Israel to its environment—has markedly intensified threats to regional national security. It has also heightened the risk of direct Israeli intervention in neighboring states' political systems and societal spheres, reflecting a broader "securitization of everyday life" aimed at regulating daily life according to Israeli security imperatives. Meanwhile, as Israel has continued its operations against Lebanon and Syria, its actions have extended to Yemen, Tunisia and Qatar. At the same time, and with US backing, it has exerted pressure on Arab regimes to adopt stringent measures against movements supportive of the resistance, seeking to constrain and politically and media-wise neutralize them, as well as to prevent fundraising for the GS and Palestine. These regimes have responded to such pressures to varying degrees.

The official Arab position has broadly maintained its traditional orientation toward the Palestine issue, centered on support for the peace process, the two-state solution and the leadership of the PLO and the PA. In this regard, Arab states have undertaken sustained diplomatic efforts to reactivate the peace process, most notably through a Saudi initiative, in coordination with France, to convene the New York conference aimed at advancing the implementation of the two-state solution. Nevertheless, the New York Declaration, endorsed by Arab states, condemned Hamas and called for its disarmament. It further outlined a framework conditioning Palestinian elections in the WB and GS on participation limited to actors committed to the Oslo Accords and the peace process, effectively excluding resistance factions that, according to all opinion polling, enjoy broader popular support than pro-Oslo forces. As a result, this approach risks exacerbating internal Palestinian fragmentation while also being perceived as accommodating Israeli preferences and reinforcing existing power asymmetries.

Egypt and Qatar have played a significant role in mediation efforts aimed at halting the offensive on GS, securing a prisoner-exchange agreement, enabling an Israeli withdrawal, facilitating humanitarian access, and advancing reconstruction. In parallel, the announcement by eight Arab and Muslim countries (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, the UAE, Türkiye, Pakistan and Indonesia) of their support for Trump's GS plan has contributed to placing the resistance in a difficult position. While the initial component of the plan refers to a ceasefire, prisoner exchanges and the entry of aid, its substantive core effectively establishes external US custodianship over GS, undermines Palestinian sovereignty over decision-making, and ties Israeli withdrawal, the cessation of attacks, and the opening of crossings to Israeli-defined conditions.

Normalization states have largely maintained their political relations with Israel, although some have recalled their ambassadors. Meanwhile, economic ties have continued, with particularly robust engagement observed in the UAE, Egypt, Jordan and Bahrain. By contrast, the normalization process with Saudi Arabia has stalled, as Riyadh has conditioned any further progress on Israel accepting a two-state solution.

At the same time, the preoccupation of several Arab states with domestic instability and internal conflicts has constrained their capacity to engage with the Palestine issue, as illustrated in the cases of Sudan, Libya, Syria and Somalia.

Arab public engagement with the Palestine issue has been extensive, particularly in the context of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, and has been most visible where space for expression exists. Numerous countries, including Jordan, Morocco, Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania, Somalia, Kuwait, and Syria, witnessed thousands of demonstrations, alongside million-strong mobilizations, especially in Yemen. Furthermore, broad grassroots initiatives emerged to raise donations and to promote boycotts of Israeli and US goods, both in these countries and in Oman and Algeria. Nevertheless, during 2025, some governments moved to tighten restrictions on charitable activities and fundraising, notably in Kuwait and Jordan.

Looking ahead, Arab efforts are likely to concentrate on rehabilitating the PA to enable its return to governance in GS, primarily through sustained political and financial support, particularly from Gulf states.

In this context, Arab states, especially Qatar, Egypt and Jordan, are expected to press for the implementation of the Trump plan regarding a ceasefire in GS, while also accelerating the transition to the agreement's second phase. This phase would involve reconstruction and the reconfiguration of the political and security order in the Strip, without conditioning it on the disarmament of Hamas. While Arab governments do not object in principle to the disarmament of Hamas and other resistance factions, they are likely to pursue a mutually acceptable arrangement, alongside a recalibration of the International Stabilization Force (ISF) mandate, limiting it primarily to "peacekeeping" and ceasefire monitoring.

Furthermore, pressures are expected to intensify regarding the disarmament of Hizbullah in Lebanon, with Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon being increasingly linked to such an outcome. Nonetheless, the party is likely to reject disarmament, which in turn will prompt efforts to formulate an arrangement aimed at ensuring de-escalation, preserving Lebanese state sovereignty, and avoiding internal confrontation.

Meanwhile, the normalization process may encounter growing obstacles due to Israel's expanding ambition to assert regional dominance and impose its security paradigm, alongside its reluctance to make concessions on a two-state solution. This is further reinforced by ongoing displacement dynamics within the occupied territories. Against this backdrop, Arab states are likely to perceive heightened national security risks, leading to a more cautious and restrained approach toward advancing the peace process.

Endnotes

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Al-Zaytouna Centre is pleased to present The Palestine Strategic Report (PSR) 2024–2025, now in its 14th consecutive edition. This report provides an academic, objective and comprehensive analysis of developments related to the Palestine issue across various dimensions. It offers up-to-date and accurate information and statistics through the end of 2025, complemented by analytical insights and forecasts.

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Prof. Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh

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