



Saudi Arabia continues to support Palestinian statehood, even to its own detriment in negotiations for normalization with Israel. Above, photos of Palestinian leaders Mahmoud Abbas and Yasser Arafat face Saudi Arabian King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

To win normalization with Israel , Saudis must learn the art of the deal

Dear Friend of Israel, Friend of FLAME:

As a primary condition for joining the Abraham Accords, Saudi Arabia continues to throw down a massive roadblock—guaranteed pathway to a Palestinian state. Unfortunately, since the Palestinian economy and political structures are bankrupt, and since both its leadership and populace remain committed to the murder of Jews and destruction of Israel, this demand contradicts both American and Israeli Middle East interests. It's a clear non-starter.

Saudi leaders realize the benefits of normalization with Israel would be immense—billions of dollars in bilateral trade, access to Israel's booming hi-tech sector and increased regional security. Yet, they persist in demands that appear both impossible and unreasonable. Why?

Above all, their citizens stridently demand their leaders' support for the Palestinians. Then, too, the Saudis believe their demand for Palestinian statehood seems a necessary price for Israel to pay in exchange for normalization with them—the Middle East's Arab heavyweight and custodian of Mecca and Medina, Islam's two holiest cities.

Likewise, the Saudis have a logical—if totally unrealistic—explanation of how the hapless Palestinians could emerge as a nation from the ashes of Hamas, the devastation of Gaza and the corruption and dysfunctionality of the Palestinian Authority (PA).

Two major flaws mar the Saudi demands: First, they place the entire burden of launching a risky Palestinian state on Israel, taking no responsibility for Palestinian hostility or competence. Second, the Saudi proposal avoids their leaders' own need to manage the rabid anti-Israel sentiment of the Saudi "street."

Finally, unlike Israel and the U.S., Saudi Arabia has no direct experience, nor has it paid any price for the behavior of the Palestinians over nearly eight decades. The UN, Israel (and the U.S.) have made numerous offers of land for a Palestinian state, yet the Palestinians, for 78 years, have refused all offers in favor of their Jihad against Jews.

In short, Saudi Arabia is trying to make a deal in which they could benefit to the tune of billions of trade dollars, plus gain a huge reputational bump in the Middle East and Muslim world, while making a deal-breaking demand for a Palestinian state at no cost to itself.

Why the Saudis' demand for a Palestinian state is anachronistic: Their plan is stuck in the 20th century, envisioning a state in the entirety of the Gaza Strip and Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. But that train left the station years ago, following many offers of just such a state that the Palestinians rejected. Moreover, the October 7th massacre proves that a Palestinian state on Israel's border—filled with terrorists determined to slaughter Jews and wipe the Jewish state off the map—would be national suicide.

Why Saudi normalization with Israel is more lucrative than Palestinian statehood: *Fathom Journal* forecasts the initial value of bilateral trade between Israel and Saudi Arabia to be \$2.7-\$2.9 billion *annually*. Israeli technology and innovation can help Saudi Arabia's efforts to diversify its economy away from oil exports by adopting Israel's advancements in renewable energy production. Absurdly, the Saudis overlook these benefits to pursue an inconsequential, unrelated demand for Palestinian sovereignty, despite undeniable Palestinian ineptitude.

Why do the Saudis feel such a pressing need to demand Palestinian statehood? As host of Islam's holiest sites, Saudi Arabia positions itself as the preeminent defender of Muslim and Palestinian rights, which resonate deeply with the world's Muslims. Normalizing relations with Israel without addressing Palestinian grievances would be seen as a betrayal, potentially eroding Saudi Arabia's soft power and religious legitimacy. This was amplified after October 7, 2023, when Israel's war to destroy Hamas in Gaza caused public outrage across the Arab and Muslim world to surge, making deals with Israel politically toxic.

Saudi plans for Palestinian statehood would require miracles. The Saudis generally align with President Trump's 20-point Gaza peace plan for the Gaza Strip—disarming Hamas, reforming the PA and rebuilding

Gaza using massive financial aid from Arab states. However, like Trump, the Saudis don't indicate how Hamas would be disarmed or how the PA would be reformed. In fact, brazenly, the Saudis refuse to contribute troops to an international stabilization force charged with disarming Hamas. They also refuse to fund Gaza reconstruction unless Hamas is disarmed and removed from power. It's as if Saudi Arabia expects a Palestinian state to miraculously appear, while they pay no price at all.

Saudis must learn the art of a deal acceptable to Israel and the U.S. Saudi Arabia hasn't experienced the Palestinians' behavior as Israel and the U.S. have. They never suffered atrocities such as the October 7th massacre, nor have their offers of Palestinian statehood been snubbed and repaid with terrorism, as Israel has. Nor have they seen billions of dollars in Palestinian aid squandered, as the U.S. has. In short, the Saudis fail to appreciate why a Palestinian state is such an enormous price for Israel and the U.S. to pay. If the Saudis truly want statehood for the Palestinians, they need to create a super-attractive deal.

How the Saudis can make an offer Israel can't refuse. To make a Palestinian state palatable to Israelis, the Saudis would have to eliminate Palestinian security threats to Israel—a very tall order, since the Palestinians have never abandoned their primary *raison d'être*—to destroy the Jewish state. The Saudis could help disarm Hamas and other Palestinian terror groups, to prevent all further attacks on Israel. They could help the Palestinians reform their education system to remove the steady diet of antisemitism and murderous death-cult ethos fed to Palestinian children. Finally, they could teach Palestinians how to govern effectively and build a sustainable economy—as well as prevent the return of home-grown jihadists on Iran's and Qatar's payroll. Simple enough?

Please make the point when speaking with family, friends, colleagues—or in letters to the editor—that the Saudis are demanding too much and offering too little to win the massive benefits of Abraham Accords membership. To succeed, they must master the art of the deal—focusing first on an offer that resolves Israel's existential security needs—then tackle the task of turning Palestinians into peace-loving neighbors.

If you agree we need to spread this truth, please use your email browser to forward this Hotline issue to fellow lovers of Israel—and encourage them to join us by subscribing to the Hotline at no charge.

Best regards,

Jason Shvili, Contributing Editor

Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)

P.S. Surely you've recently read of some celebrity, politician, radical student, foreign head of state or media pundit slander Israel with the "Gaza genocide" lie. Many who spread this lie are ignorant, but most are anti-Israel haters. They care nothing for the truth. The tragedy is, when they utter the Gaza genocide falsehood, too few knowledgeable people—and virtually no media—stand up to refute it. Indeed, when you share the simple facts, the genocide lie crumbles. Upon learning that Israel conducts its war against Hamas terrorists with the highest ethical standards—and that *nothing* Israel does in Gaza fits the definition of genocide—fair-minded people quickly see through the lie. I hope you'll agree that we supporters of the Israel-U.S. relationship need to speak out. FLAME's new *hasbarah*—explanatory message—"Facts Shatter Gaza Genocide Lies"—describes what genocide is *and is not* and proves factually that Israel's tactics in the war are ethical and righteous. It also reveals demographic data showing that the Palestinian population in Gaza is actually increasing. Finally, it notes that those who spread the Gaza genocide lie fit the classic definition of antisemites. Please review this convincing, fact-based editorial, which FLAME is about to publish to millions—in leading social media, as well as in the *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Tampa Bay Times*, *Denver Post* and *Los Angeles Times*. This piece will also be sent to all

members of Congress, the President and Vice President. If you agree that this kind of public relations effort on Israel's behalf is critical, I urge you to **support us** with a donation.

