



Israel Hosts a Summit as Social Justice Activists Lament the Normalization of Ties in the Absence of Fair Concessions to Palestinians

Israel hosted a summit this week with the foreign ministers of several Arab nations, as social justice activists lament the normalization of ties in the absence of fair concessions to Palestinians. The warming of relations under the existing circumstances has been criticized for maintaining the status quo and the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. The autocratic Arab regimes who signed on to the Abraham Accords broke with the longstanding regional position that was in place to try and ensure that the normalization of relations would be coupled with the attainment of concrete advancements in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. They also did so despite the fact that the majority of citizens in Arab countries across the Middle East do not support diplomatic normalization with Israel until Palestinian rights are secured, as consistently shown in opinion polling. As such, there is a sentiment of frustration among rights advocates with the disregard of various Arab leaders to the plight of Palestinians and their struggle for social justice. Notably, Jordan's King Abdullah II met with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in the West Bank after skipping the Israeli summit. Groups of protesters were also present outside of the summit in solidarity with Palestinians, drawing attention to their absence and Israel's continued illegal occupation.

Though multiple leaders did call for fairer treatment of Palestinians during the summit, no immediate plans have been made to renew negotiations. Many critics have pointed out that these are just words, and no concrete actions have been taken to improve the lives of Palestinians living under illegal occupation or to hold the Israeli government accountable for its discriminatory policies and practices. Palestinians have been subjected to an array of human rights violations at the hands of Israeli authorities. They have limited ability to travel freely, are denied equal status under the law, face unjust family reunification laws, and are under the constant threat of forced displacement and land dispossession – the last of which is done to make way for illegal and universally-condemned Israeli settlements. All of this has led several prominent entities, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the United Nations, to label Israel as an apartheid state.

While some have looked past the prolonging of the aforementioned issues and tried to praise the summit as a historic moment, other analysts and issue experts highlight the possibility that the thawing of relations is being used as a friendship of convenience to neutralize regional adversary Iran. Dubbed the Negev Summit, talks partly centered around questions and criticism of the American negotiations for a restoration of the Iran nuclear deal. There were calls for the United States to re-prioritize its interest in the Middle East, and the U.S. also used the summit to push for the governments present to join in the condemnation and sanctioning of Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. So far, many of these regimes have remained quiet or neutral.

The other meeting between the heads of Jordan and Palestine was mostly a show of solidarity, but also served another purpose as an attempt to try and promote tranquility in the West Bank. The holy Muslim month of Ramadan is around the corner, and overlaps with the Jewish holiday of Passover and the Christian celebration of Easter. During Ramadan last year, Israeli security forces drew criticism for a wave of brutality, including the storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and a violent crackdown against protesters demonstrating in support of Palestinians facing forcible displacement from their generational homes. Observers are hoping that nothing of the sort unfolds this time around.