

The Diplomatic Report: A Monthly Review of Israel's Regional Foreign Policies

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A. Israel and the Palestinians

- **Still No Peace Process, International Community Sticks to the Two-State Solution** - US Secretary of State Blinken [spoke](#) with Israeli Foreign Minister Ashkenazi and emphasized the US support of the two-state solution. The US [announced](#) that it would provide 235 million USD in aid to the Palestinians in an attempt to restore trust between the sides following Trump's presidency. The leaders of Labor, Meretz Party and the Arab Joint List, Michaeli, Horowitz and Odeh (respectively), [participated](#) in J Street's annual conference and emphasized the need to promote the peace process with the Palestinians. In a letter to the UN Security Council, the UAE [emphasized](#) its support of the two-state solution based on previous resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. Additionally, the UAE urged the sides to avoid unilateral steps and to seize the potential of regional collaboration to promote Israel-Palestinian peace. After Prime Minister Netanyahu [promised](#) to open direct Tel Aviv - Mecca flights, the Saudi Foreign Minister [said](#) that any potential deal depends on progress towards peace between Israel and Palestine, with Palestinians being given a sovereign state based on 1967 borders.
- **Israel Works Against the International Criminal Court's Decision** - Netanyahu [held](#) high-level talks with Ashkenazi, Defense Minister Gantz and other senior ministers on Israel's strategic response to the ICC's war crimes probe. Subsequently, Israel [responded](#) that the ICC has no jurisdiction and authority to open a probe against Israel. The US [rescinded](#) the sanctions against the ICC issued by Trump. The Yesha Council (an umbrella organization of municipal councils of settlements in the West Bank) has [launched](#) its own diplomatic initiative against the ICC's decision, including information explaining that the West Bank is not occupied and that Israel's occupation is good for the Palestinians. Human Rights Watch [issued](#) a report accusing Israel of committing crimes against humanity, apartheid and persecution. Strategic Affairs Minister Biton [accused](#) the report as an ongoing attempt by Human Rights Watch to undermine Israel's right to exist as the nation-state of the Jewish people. Israel continues to [bar](#) Laith Abu Zeyad from leaving the West Bank to work in London, citing security reasons.
- **The Continued Struggle for Sovereignty and Recognition in Jerusalem** - The civil struggle against the Israeli court decision to evict Palestinian families in East Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood continues to [escalate](#), resulting in violent clashes between protesters and the police. Overall, April was a [chaotic](#) month in Jerusalem during the tense days of the [Ramadan](#). Jews and Arabs [uploaded](#) videos of attacks against one another and the police placed [barricades](#) near Damascus Gate, adding to the chaos. The

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clashes drew responses from the international community: the [UAE](#) urged Israel to assume responsibility and stop the Jerusalem violence. [Bahrain](#) expressed grave concern over dangerous clashes in East Jerusalem while [Jordan](#) accused Israel of inciting the violence. [Germany](#) asked both parties to de-escalate the situation, while also condemning missile attacks from Gaza against the Israeli civilian population. The Jerusalem municipality has [advanced](#) the approval of 540 new housing units in the controversial Har Homa neighborhood across the Green Line. Israeli veterans [opposed](#) a plan to expand a war memorial in East Jerusalem into a heritage site.

- **The Conflict in the Gaza Strip Escalates Again** - Hamas [fired](#) dozens of missiles on the Israeli population amid ongoing Jerusalem unrest. In response, Israel [attacked](#) Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip and [closed](#) the Gaza fishing zone. Israel [sent](#) an ultimatum to Hamas through Wennesland, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, together with its desire to reduce tensions. Three days later, Israel [reopened](#) the Gaza fishing zone and Wennesland [urged](#) the sides to avoid further escalation. An Egyptian delegation [visited](#) the Gaza Strip to negotiate a prisoner swap.
- **Israel Ignored the Palestinian's Request to Hold Elections in East Jerusalem** - The Palestinian Authority's Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki [urged](#) the Quartet (US, UN, EU and Russia) to pressure Israel to permit voting in East Jerusalem. The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories [said](#) Israel should prevent the elections in East Jerusalem because Hamas is likely to win and if that happens, the security coordination will end. Israel [informed](#) the Palestinian Authority that it decided not to respond to the Palestinian's request to allow voting in East Jerusalem. The reason given was that the government formation process in Israel is ongoing. Israeli officials [said](#) Israel has no plans to prevent the Palestinian election in general and that Israel is not [intervening](#) in the elections. Israeli security forces [broke](#) up a meeting of Fatah members in East Jerusalem to discuss the elections. Palestinian president Abbas [postponed](#) the elections, citing that Israel had not committed to allowing Palestinians in East Jerusalem to vote.
- **The Creeping Annexation** - A controversial vote by the KKL Board of Directors on whether to authorize land purchases in the West Bank was [called off](#) indefinitely. This was due to pressure by left-wing reform and conservative factions, human rights groups and the loss of a majority in favor of the decision within the institution.
- **Civil Relations** - President Rivlin [sent](#) his greetings to Abbas on the advent of the Ramadan holiday. Abbas [sent](#) Rivlin his condolences over the Mount Meron tragedy. Israeli author A.B Joshua visited Ramallah at the invitation of the PLO's Committee for Interaction with Israeli Society.

B. Israel and the Middle East

- **Restoring Relations with Jordan** - After the arrest of Prince Hamza, Jordanian officials [sent](#) Israel a message that the situation is under control and there is no threat to the kingdom's stability. Gantz [said](#) the arrest of Prince Hamza is an internal issue, and that Israel is prepared to assist Jordan as necessary, as a strong and flourishing Jordan is an Israeli security and economic interest. After a long delay and US pressure, Netanyahu [agreed](#) to send more water to Jordan. Israel also [agreed](#) to send Jordan medical aid to assist with COVID-19. The Israeli Foreign Ministry [congratulated](#) King Abdullah for Jordan's centennial celebration. King Abdullah [spoke](#) with President Rivlin and

expressed his condolences for the Mount Meron tragedy, while Rivlin also [expressed](#) his condolences for the death of the King's uncle, Prince Talal.

- **Formal Diplomatic Relations with the UAE** - The Abu Dhabi-based airline Etihad Airways [inaugurated](#) its Tel Aviv - Abu Dhabi flights with the UAE ambassador to Israel on board. An Israeli delegation from the Foreign Ministry [visited](#) Dubai as part of its preparations for the Dubai Expo. Zvi Heifetz, the special Israeli envoy to the Gulf countries, [met](#) with Emirati Foreign Minister Bin Zayed. Bin Zayed [called](#) Ashkenazi and sent his condolences for the Meron tragedy. Israeli and Emirati Health Ministers have [signed](#) an agreement to promote cooperation in various health fields.
- **Civil, Economic and Military Relations with the UAE** - Israeli energy company Delek announced its intent [to sell](#) its stake in the Tamar gas field to Mubadala Petroleum, owned by the Abu Dhabi government, in the biggest Israel-UAE deal yet. Israeli and Emirati air forces [collaborated](#) in an international military exercise in Greece, together with the host nation, the US, France, Spain and Cyprus. The head of the UAE cyber authority [met](#) his Israeli counterpart in Israel to promote collaborations between the two nations. The local Jewish communities in the UAE and Bahrain [held](#) Holocaust remembrance ceremonies for the first time. The UAE embassy in Israel's Twitter account [sent](#) its sincere condolences to all the victims of the Holocaust.
- **Advancing Relations with Bahrain** – Ashkenazi and his Bahraini counterpart [discussed](#) cooperation fighting COVID-19. Tourism Minister Farkash-Hacohen and her Bahraini counterpart also [talked](#) about ways to expand tourism between the countries. In a first such agreement in the world, Israel and Bahrain [agreed](#) to recognize each other's green passports which will permit travelers to enter without quarantining. Bahrain's national airline [announced](#) the opening of a direct Manama – Tel Aviv flight in June. Bahraini Foreign Minister [sent](#) Ashkenazi his condolences for the Meron tragedy.
- **Civil Relations with Egypt** - Egypt's new grand museum in Cairo [exhibits](#) ancient [Jewish](#) artifacts. It was reported that EgyptAir decided to [acquire](#) the Cairo – Tel Aviv flight from the smaller AirSinai and increase the number of weekly flights. Since opening the Taba border crossing between Israel and Egypt, Egypt [became](#) the number one tourist destination for Israelis. The Egyptian [Foreign Ministry](#), together with [organizations](#) and private [individuals](#), expressed their condolences for the Meron tragedy.
- **The Conflict with Iran on Many Fronts** - US officials [revealed](#) that Israel was behind the explosion at Iran's centrifuge facility in Natanz and the [attack](#) on Iran's "spy-ship" in the Red Sea. US officials [said](#) that Israel's actions surprised them and violated their agreement to keep each other updated. An Israeli-owned ship [was](#) attacked off the UAE coast. Israel's security cabinet [convened](#) for the first time in two months to discuss Israel's response to US intentions to return to the JCPOA. Israeli and US officials, including Mossad chief and Israel's National Security Advisor, [held](#) strategic discussions in Washington DC about the Iranian threat. Ashkenazi also [discussed](#) the Iranian threat with British Minister Gove. Israel continued to [strike](#) Iranian targets in Syria and reportedly [dropped](#) leaflets near the border, greeting the Syrians for the month of Ramadan and wishing for them to dispose of Iran and Hezbollah.
- **Normalization with Sudan Progresses Slowly** - Sudan [repealed](#) the Israel boycott law, which forbade diplomatic and economic ties with Israel, at a joint meeting of Sudan's

ruling Sovereign Council. Sudanese sources [said](#) they plan to send a first official delegation to Israel, but the report was later [denied](#), stating that Sudan accepted Israel's invitation but the plans were later changed with no explanations why.

C. Israel and Europe

- **Europe is Committed to Elections in the Palestinian Authority** - Diplomats from France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Poland, Netherland, Sweden, Ireland, Finland, Portugal, Germany and the EU [expressed](#) the importance of democratic elections in the Palestinian Authority in an exchange with the Israeli Foreign Ministry. The British Consulate in Jerusalem [urged](#) Israel to honor the elections in the Palestinian Authority and stop arresting Hamas candidates in the West Bank.
- **Israel Deepens its Relations With Europe and Fights Antisemitism in Europe** - Israel will [join](#) the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings. This makes Israel, which is not a member of the Council of Europe, the first country to join the convention outside of the continent. Israel [criticized](#) the French court ruling for letting Sarah Halimi's killer avoid trial because of his mental state, brought on by cannabis. The Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions [adopted](#) the IHRA definition on Antisemitism. The Foreign Ministers of Israel and Poland, together with the two nations' ambassadors across the world, [joined](#) the "Yellow Daffodil" campaign commemorating the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The Foreign Ministry [condemned](#) a parade in Ukraine celebrating the establishment of a Nazi's Waffen SS.

D. Israel and the Mediterranean

- **Israel's Hellenic Alliance Deepens and Spreads to the Gulf** - Ashkenazi [attended](#) the first quadrilateral strategic-regional meeting of the foreign ministers of Israel, Greece, Cyprus, and the UAE, held in Cyprus. Israel and Greece [signed](#) their largest defense deal to date, worth about 1.65 billion USD, which includes an International Flight Training Center for Greek pilots by Israel's Elbit Systems defense.
- **Israel and Lebanon Aiming to Resume Negotiations on Maritime Border** - The Lebanese Energy Minister [signed](#) a decree that increases the area claimed by Lebanon in the maritime dispute. In response, Energy Minister Steinitz [said](#) that Israel will present its maximalist demand. The US has [appointed](#) its former ambassador to Algeria to lead the mediating team in the maritime border talks between Israel and Lebanon.
- **Complicated Relations with Turkey** - After a three-year hiatus, an Israeli minister has been [invited](#) to Turkey to attend an official conference sponsored by the country's president. It was reported that the Turkish Transport Minister has [asked](#) his Israeli counterpart to allow a Turkish firm to bid in a tender for the privatization of Haifa Port. The report added that Israel's National Security Council expressed its reservations for such a move. The Turkish Embassy in Tel Aviv has reportedly [contacted](#) the Israeli Foreign Ministry with regards to the issue, but no answer was given. Following President Biden's recognition of the Armenian genocide, Members of Knesset from the Labor, Meretz Party and Yesh Atid Party [urged](#) Israel to also recognize the Armenian genocide. The Foreign Ministry [issued](#) a statement recognizing the tragedy and terrible suffering of the Armenian people but refrained from recognizing it as a genocide. Turkey criticized Israel's response to the Hamas missile attacks.