



Argument

An expert's point of view on a current event

The Abraham Accords Passed Their First Big Test

When war broke out in Gaza, Arab countries chose rapprochement with Israel over solidarity with Palestinians

By Anchal Vohra / June 8, 2021

Barely days after Israel and Hamas signed a cease-fire to end the recent cycle of violence, a museum in Dubai called Crossroad of Civilizations featured an exhibition dedicated to the history of the Holocaust and the horrors of antisemitism. Soon after, on June 2, Israeli and Emirati businessmen at Dubai's Global Investment Forum discussed bilateral trade as their governments signed a double taxation avoidance treaty, and the Emiratis invited Israel to set up shop in a free trade zone.

[...]

None of the Arab governments resorted to their diplomatic toolkit to send a stronger message to Israel. Rather, they used plain and routine condemnation. "Their criticism was mere rhetoric," said **Yoel Guzansky**, a senior research fellow at the **Institute for National Security Studies** specializing in Gulf politics and security. "They did nothing on the ground. They did not expel ambassadors or threatened to walk out of the accords or initiated intra-Arab negotiations."

Guzansky said the Arabs were undoubtedly unhappy with Israel over storming the al-Aqsa mosque, but as the conflict moved to Gaza, their tone softened. "They blamed Israel for what happened in the mosque, for what happened in the city. That is more understandable because of Jerusalem's religious importance to Islam," he added. "But as Jerusalem became quieter and Hamas started shooting rockets, it played into the hands of Abraham Accord countries. It offered them a chance to be more balanced and divide criticism between Israel and Hamas. I noticed that several Saudi outlets criticized Hamas very loudly. They blamed Hamas for the situation that the people in Gaza found themselves in. Saudi [Arabia] and the UAE didn't want Hamas to come out of the conflict with an upper hand."

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