

Sudan signs deal to normalize relations with Israel

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Khartoum, January 6 (RHC)-- Sudan has signed the so-called "Abraham Accords" with the United States despite the move being rejected by its political parties when it was first announced in October last year. A statement from the office of Sudan's prime minister on Wednesday said Justice Minister Nasredeen Abdulbari signed the accord with visiting U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

Sudan's Acting Minister of Finance Hiba Ahmed and Mnuchin also "signed a memorandum of understanding in Khartoum to provide a same-day bridge financing facility to clear Sudan's arrears to the World Bank", her office said in a statement. "This move will enable Sudan to regain access to over \$1 billion in annual financing from the World Bank for the first time in 27 years," the statement added.

The U.S. embassy in Khartoum said the agreement will "help further Sudan on its transformative path to stability, security, and economic opportunity." The signing came just over two months after US President Donald Trump announced that Sudan would start to normalise ties with Israel.

Sudanese political parties rejected the government's decision to normalise relations with Israel at the time it was announced, with officials saying they will form an opposition front against the agreement. In a statement, Sudan's Popular Congress Party, the second most prominent component of the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) political coalition, said in October that Sudanese people were not obligated to accept the normalisation deal.

Sudan's former Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi also slammed the announcement, adding that he withdrew from a government-organised conference at the time in protest.

Last year, the Trump administration engineered diplomatic pacts between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain — the first since Jordan recognised Israel in the 1990s and Egypt in the 1970s. Morocco also established diplomatic ties with Israel.

The agreements are all with countries that are geographically distant from Israel and have played a minor role, if any, in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The accords have also contributed to the severe isolation and weakening of the Palestinians by eroding a long-standing Arab consensus that recognition of Israel should only be given in return for concessions in the peace process.

Mnuchin's one-day visit focused on the country's struggling economy and possible US economic assistance, including debt relief, the statement said. Sudan has more than \$60 billion in foreign debt. Relief from its arrears and access to foreign loans are widely seen as its gateway to economic recovery.

The government has been struggling with a huge budget deficit and widespread shortages of essential goods, including fuel, bread and medicine. Annual inflation soared past 200 percent in recent months as prices of bread and other staples surged, according to official figures.

Last month, Trump's administration finalised the removal of Sudan from the US list of "state sponsors of terrorism." The move was a key incentive for the government in Khartoum to normalise relations with Israel.

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