

Palestinian resistance groups denounce surprise visit by Israel's military affairs minister to Bahrain

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Israeli minister of military affairs Benny Gantz is greeted by a Bahraini military official during an official visit at Bahrain International Airport, Bahrain, on February 2, 2022. (Photo by Reuters)

Ramallah, February 3 (RHC)-- Palestinian resistance groups have strongly condemned Bahraini officials over receiving Israeli minister of military affairs Benny Gantz, who arrived in the Persian Gulf kingdom on an unannounced visit, terming it as a moral decadence for the Al Khalifah regime.

"We condemn the landing of an Israeli military aircraft in the Bahraini capital of Manama, which had Israeli minister of military affairs Benny Gantz and a number of commanders of the enemy army on board," Hazem Qassem, a spokesman for Hamas resistance group, wrote in a post published on his Twitter page on Thursday.

The Popular Resistance Committees, which is a coalition of a number of Palestinian resistance groups, also denounced Gantz's visit to Bahrain. "The Bahraini regime's reception of terrorist Bani Gantz points to the moral decadence of the Al Khalifah dynasty, and its further plunge in the quagmire of normalization," they said in a statement.

"Bahrain's reception of criminals and murderers of our women and children equates to a dagger in our back, and emboldens the Zionist enemy to commit more crimes against our [Palestinian] nation," the statement also read.

More than 240 Bahraini scholars have condemned the Israeli FM's visit to Manama to open the regime's embassy, and rejected normalization of ties with Israel.

Gantz landed in Bahrain on Wednesday. He is the first Israeli minister of military affairs to ever officially visit the Persian Gulf country, and was accompanied by several top military and security officials, including Israeli navy chief Admiral David Saar Salama.

"The aircraft carrying the delegation is the first IAF [Israeli Air Force] plane to land in Bahrain," the Israeli ministry of military affairs said in a statement. "Throughout the visit, the minister is expected to conduct meetings with high-ranking officials in the Bahraini defense establishment and with the Kingdom's leadership," it added.

On September 30 last year, Israeli foreign minister Yair Lapid arrived at the Manama airport to become the regime's highest-ranking official to visit the Persian Gulf country since Israel and Bahrain forged formal relations in 2020. He met King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifah.

During the trip, Israel and Bahrain signed deals on cooperation in medicine, healthcare, sports, and water and environmental conservation. Tel Aviv also opened an embassy in Bahrain. The Bahraini embassy in the Israeli-occupied territories was also agreed to be opened by the end of 2021.

Former Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu signed agreements with Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani during an official ceremony hosted by ex-US president Donald Trump at the White House on September 15, 2020.

Palestinians, who seek an independent state in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip with East al-Quds as its capital, view the deals as a betrayal of their cause.

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