

Palestinians slam UAE over Israeli prime minister's visit



Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan (R) greets Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett on his arrival to Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates, on June 9, 2022. (Photo via AP)

Ramallah, June 10 (RHC)-- The Palestinian resistance movement Islamic Jihad has strongly denounced the Israeli premier's latest visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), saying Abu Dhabi's insistence on

expanding ties with Tel Aviv amounts to turning a blind eye to the suffering of Palestinians.

Tariq Salmi, a spokesman for the Islamic Jihad, in a statement on Thursday, said the Arab country's growing proximity with the Israeli regime shows contempt for Palestinian lives.

"Insistence on normalization of ties and establishment of all-out relations with the Israeli enemy amounts to a denial of all forms of sufferings that Palestinians are experiencing as a result of the escalating Zionist aggression and terrorism in al-Quds and the West Bank," he said.

Naftali Bennett's visit to Abu Dhabi on Thursday is his second official trip to the Persian Gulf country since the two sides formally normalized their ties in 2020 under the so-called Abraham Accords brokered by then-US president Donald Trump.

Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan were other countries to normalize ties with the Tel Aviv regime at that time. A statement from Bennett's office said the Israeli leader will meet UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and that the two will discuss "various regional issues," with Iran likely to top the agenda.

In a video statement recorded before embarking on the trip, Bennett commended countries who drafted and adopted an anti-Iran resolution at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) board of governors meeting in Vienna on Wednesday.

Last month, Israel and the UAE finalized a free trade agreement as part of the normalization process between them, marking the first big trade accord between the Tel Aviv regime and an Arab country. The pact was signed in Dubai on May 31 after months of hectic negotiations and drew sharp reactions from Muslim countries.

President of the UAE-Israel Business Council Dorian Barak said the trade pact defined tax rates, imports, and intellectual property, which would encourage more Israeli companies to set up offices in the UAE, particularly in Dubai. The council predicts there will be almost 1,000 Israeli companies working in or through the UAE by the end of the current year.

The UAE officially inaugurated its embassy in Israel on July 14, 2021. The inauguration ceremony was hosted by UAE's ambassador to Israel Mohammad al-Khaja, with the regime's president Isaac Herzog in attendance.

Israel also opened its embassy in the Emirati capital in June last year, which was inaugurated by the regime's foreign minister Yair Lapid. He also inaugurated the regime's consulate in Dubai during the same visit.

Israeli ministers had previously made low-profile visits to the UAE, but Lapid was the most senior Israeli official to visit the country, and also the first to travel on an official mission.

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

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