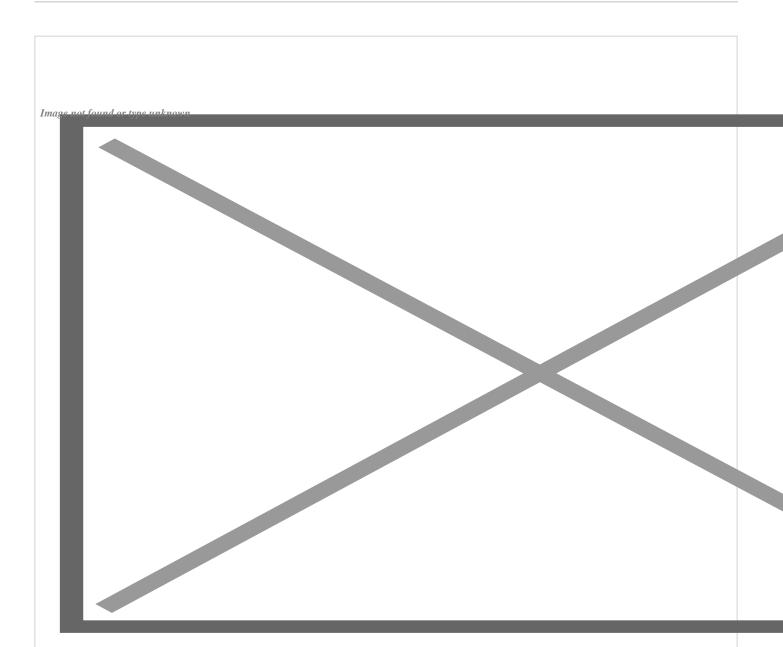# Israel approves transfer of Egyptian islands to Saudi Arabia amid normalization push

A satellite image, captured on July 9, 2022, shows a view of the Strait of Tiran at the mouth of the Red Sea's Gulf of Aqaba with (L to R) the Egyptian Sinai mainland, the islands of Tiran and Sanafir, and Saudi Arabian mainland. (Via AFP)

Washington, July 17 (RHC)-- Israel has reportedly approved the provisions of an agreement on the strategic islands of Tiran and Sanafir in the Red Sea, paving the ground for the official normalization of ties between Saudi Arabia and the occupying regime.

Washington has been "quietly negotiating" the deal between the two sides for months, a Thursday report by Axios said, noting that it is expected to be officially announced during US President Joe Biden's visit to Saudi Arabia this weekend.

Under the 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty, Egypt took control of Tiran and Sanafir as the sides agreed to demilitarize the islands and to allow the presence of a multinational observer force to remain.

The looming deal also gives guarantees to the Israeli regime about freedom of navigation based on Saudi commitments.   The deal, as per the report, will pave the way for separate agreements between Saudi Arabia and Israel to allow Israeli airlines to use the Kingdom's air space for eastbound flights to countries such as India and China. It can also lead to direct charter flights from the occupied territories to Saudi Arabia for Muslim pilgrims.

During his visit to Saudi Arabia, Biden said that he was "optimistic" about potential steps toward the normalization of ties between the oil-rich kingdom and the Israeli regime.

Reference to the planned normalization can also be traced in a Washington Post op-ed penned by the U.S. president, where he described his direct flight from Tel Aviv to Jeddah as a "small symbol" and "steps toward normalization" between the two sides.

The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco became the first Arab countries in decades to normalize relations with Israel in a deal brokered by former US President Donald Trump in 2020.

Riyadh has not officially jumped on the bandwagon yet, but interactions have been already in place between Riyadh and Tel Aviv for years despite the fact that Saudi Arabia had conditioned the normalization on the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state within the 1967 borders.

The kingdom in November 2020 granted permission for Israeli airlines to use its airspace, hours before the first Israeli flight to the UAE was set to take off.

Palestinians and human rights activists have condemned the normalization agreements between Arab states and the Israeli regime as a "betrayal" to the Palestinian cause and a "stab in the back" of Palestinians.

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