

*U.S. think tank supports normalization deals with Israel declines in Persian Gulf nations*

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Washington, August 3 (RHC)-- The latest findings by a pro-Israel think tank in Washington show that support for the US-brokered normalization deals between the Israeli regime and Arab countries has plummeted in Persian Gulf Arab nations.

According to an opinion poll conducted by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, only 27 percent of respondents in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and 20 percent in Bahrain viewed the accords as positive for the region.

The group added that the figures were respectively 47 and 45 percent in the two countries in 2020, when the so-called Abraham Accords were billed as part of a process that purportedly sought to push Israel to work on its decades-long conflict with Palestinians.

In Saudi Arabia, which has not normalized its relations with Israel despite a push by Washington, support for the accords also fell by half to 20 percent. Saudi Arabia says it is committed to the 2002 so-called Arab Peace Initiative, which conditions normalizing ties with Israel on the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state within the 1967 borders.

Last May, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said at an Arab League meeting in the Red Sea port city of Jeddah that "The Palestinian issue was and remains the central issue for Arab countries, and it is at the top of the kingdom's priorities."

"We will not delay in providing assistance to the Palestinian people in recovering their lands, restoring their legitimate rights and establishing an independent state on the 1967 borders with East al-Quds as its capital," he noted.

Following the report, Anna Jacobs, a senior Analyst on Persian Gulf states at the Crisis Group, said that too often public opinion in Persian Gulf countries is underestimated as a factor in government decision making. "Public opinion matters more to the calculations of leaders in the Persian Gulf than many observers think," she said while commenting on the findings and any potential rapprochement between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

The UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco signed US-brokered normalization agreements with Israel in 2020, drawing condemnations from Palestinians who slammed the deals as "a stab in the back of the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people."

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman warns that any normalization of relations between some Arab governments and the regime in Israel will not contribute to stability and security in the region. Tensions have been high across the occupied West Bank in recent months, with the Israeli military carrying out near-nightly raids and the Palestinians responding with retaliatory attacks.

More than 200 Palestinians, including 35 children, have been killed by Israel since the beginning of this year. A total of 165 people have died in the West Bank and East al-Quds, making 2023 one of the bloodiest years in the occupied Palestinian territories. Another 36 people were killed in the Gaza Strip.

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