

Israel's Netanyahu will soon visit Manama at invitation of Bahraini crown prince

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U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (L), Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (C) and Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdulatif bin Rashid al-Zayani during their meeting in occupied Jerusalem. (Photo: Reuters)

Tel Aviv, November 25 (RHC)-- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says he will visit Bahrain "soon" at the invitation of the Persian Gulf kingdom's Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah, weeks after the two sides signed a controversial normalization deal.

Netanyahu said in a statement on Tuesday that he had had a “very friendly” conversation with the crown prince, adding that it was the second time they had spoken. “We are both very excited by the fact that we can bring the fruits of peace to our nations ... in a very short time. That’s why he (the premier) invited me to come in the near future for an official visit to Bahrain. I will do that, on your behalf, with pleasure,” the statement added.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi is planning to travel to Bahrain on December 3rd to attend the so-called IISS Manama Dialogue 2020 security summit, which will open on December 4th. Ashkenazi is scheduled to stay in Bahrain until December 6th, when the conference ends.

Last week, Netanyahu hosted a trilateral meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdulatif bin Rashid al-Zayani in occupied Jerusalem.

Manama and Tel Aviv signed a joint communiqué establishing full diplomatic relations on October 18, weeks after Bahrain, following the United Arab Emirates’ footsteps, agreed to normalize ties with US mediation.

The normalization deals have drawn widespread condemnation from Palestinians, who seek an independent state in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem al-Quds as its capital. They say the deals ignore their rights and do not serve the Palestinian cause.

The news comes a day after a member of Netanyahu’s cabinet and Likud party on Monday confirmed reports that the Israeli premier had visited Saudi Arabia for a clandestine meeting with the kingdom’s de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and the U.S. secretary of state. Israel’s Kan public radio and Army Radio said Mossad chief Yossi Cohen had also attended the meeting.

Sunday’s meeting marked the first known encounter between senior Israeli and Saudi officials, amid attempts by the U.S. to coax the Riyadh regime to follow its neighbors, the UAE and Bahrain, in establishing formal diplomatic relations with Israel.

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