

# Israel and Morocco Establish Relations



From Left: Israel's Prime Minister, *Benjamin Netanyahu*, United States' President, *Donald Trump* and Morocco's King, *Mohammed VI*. Photos by various sources/AFP

The following are Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's remarks on US President Donald Trump's statement on the establishment of relations between Israel and Morocco, at the Western Wall, at the ceremony to light the first Hanukkah candle, with the participation of US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman:

"I've always believed that this historic day would come, I've always worked for it. I want to first thank President Trump for his extraordinary efforts to expand peace, to bring peace to Israel and the peoples of the Middle East. President Trump, the people of Israel and the State of Israel will be forever indebted to you for your magnificent efforts on our behalf.

"I want to thank, too, the King of Morocco, King Mohammed VI, for taking this historic decision to bring a historic peace between us. The people of Morocco and the Jewish people have had a warm relationship in the modern period. Everybody knows the tremendous friendship shown by the kings of Morocco and the people of Morocco to the Jewish community there. And hundreds of thousands of these Moroccan Jews came to Israel, and they form a human bridge between our two countries and our two peoples, of sympathy respect, of fondness and love. I think that this is the foundation on which we can now build this peace. We'll resume liaison offices quickly between Israel and Morocco and work as rapidly as possible to establish full diplomatic relations. We'll also institute direct flights between Morocco and Israel and Israel and Morocco, giving this bridge of peace an even more solid foundation. This will be a very warm peace. Peace has never – the light of peace on this Hanukkah day has never – shone brighter than today in the Middle East."

Statement by Michael Pompeo, Secretary of State, on progress towards peace:

"The agreement reached between Israel

and Morocco to normalize relations is another remarkable step toward peace. In the coming weeks, Israel and Morocco will assume full diplomatic relations. This agreement will also grant overflights and direct flights to and from Israel and will promote unfettered economic cooperation between Israeli and Moroccan companies. This significant step is the result of the hard, diplomatic work of many who have devoted their time and expertise to achieving an outcome that benefits both parties. I want to recognize the incredible efforts made by the professionals here at the Department of State who along with Special Advisor Jared Kushner have worked tirelessly to move the region beyond conflicts of the past.

"In 1777, Morocco was the first country to grant diplomatic recognition to the United States of America. That same year, Morocco opened its ports to the ships of the new American republic, allowing us to engage in trade and commerce and supporting our fight for freedom. Our friendship has endured. Today, together with Israel and Morocco we are declaring to the world that we are focused on unlocking the potential of all our citizens to ensure the continued prosperity and security of our countries."

President Trump has also recognized Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara, "The United States continues to believe only political negotiations are capable of resolving the issues between Morocco and the Polisario. As we have long stated, we believe those negotiations should occur within the framework of Morocco's autonomy plan.

"Morocco's efforts to promote tolerance - from its historical tradition of protecting its Jewish minority, the signing of the Marrakech Declaration, to yesterday's agreement with Israel - sets an example to the region and throughout the world. There is a powerful verse in the Scripture that reads 'a harvest of righteousness is sown in

peace by those who make peace.' The United States, Israel, and Morocco have embraced peace and the world is better off for it."

How the world reacted to announcement that Morocco will normalize relations with Israel in US-brokered deal.

Morocco became the fourth Arab country since August to strike a deal aimed at normalizing relations with Israel. The others were the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan.

Here are some of the mixed global reactions:

## ***Palestinians***

Bassam al-Salhi, a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization's Executive Committee, condemned the deal.

"Any Arab retreat from the [2002] Arab Peace Initiative, which stipulates that normalization comes only after Israel ends its occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands, is unacceptable and increases Israel's belligerence and its denial of the Palestinian people's rights," al-Salhi said.

In Gaza, Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said: "This is a sin and it doesn't serve the Palestinian people. The Israeli occupation uses every new normalization to increase its aggression against the Palestinian people and increase its settlement expansion."

## ***The Polisario***

The Polisario, made up of the local Sahrawi people who fought a war for independence from 1975 to 1991, condemned "in the strongest terms" Trump's attempt to give to Morocco "that which does not belong to him".

"Trump's decision does not change the legal nature of the Sahara issue because the international community does not recognize Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara," the statement read.

Morocco controls 80 percent of the disputed land, including phosphate deposits and the fishing waters.

## ***Iran***

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, an adviser to Iran's parliamentary speaker, said it was a "betrayal" and a stab in the back of Palestine.

This follows Iran's prior condemnation of Bahrain and the UAE in their decision to normalize relations with Israel, calling it a shameful move and holding their governments responsible for any insecurity caused by Israel in the Gulf region.

## ***Egypt***

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, whose country has been linked since 1979 by a peace treaty with Israel, hailed the deal as an "important step towards more stability and regional cooperation" in the Middle East.

## ***Oman***

Oman said it hoped the move will strengthen efforts towards a lasting and just peace in the Middle East, according to its foreign ministry.

## ***Spain***

"Regarding the normalization of relations between Morocco and Israel, we welcome that normalisation, as we have welcomed each and every one of the normalisations that have taken place in recent weeks," said Spanish Foreign Minister Arancha Laya.

"Regarding peace between Israelis and Palestinians, that remains an issue to be resolved. And the question of Western Sahara remains to be resolved. And in both cases, Spain's position is very clear - the UN resolutions need to be sought as a way to resolve those two questions," he added

## ***The United Nations***

The UN said its position was "unchanged" on the disputed Western Sahara region.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres believes "the solution to the question can still be found based on Security Council resolutions." The UN chief's message to the two parties "is to avoid any action that could further aggravate a tense situation."