

Sudan's military junta to normalise relations with Israel amid massive crackdown on Palestinians

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As the new far-right government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ramps up its murderous repression of the Palestinians, the head of Sudan's military junta, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, has agreed to "normalise" relations with Israel in the near future.

It is yet another sordid betrayal of the Palestinians by an Arab regime that has barely been reported in the Arab media, much less commented upon or criticised.

The announcement came during Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen's visit to Khartoum, the Sudanese capital, where he also discussed military and security issues. The signing ceremony of the peace agreement "will take place in a few months' time in Washington after the establishment of a civilian government... as part of the ongoing transition process in the country," according to a statement issued by Israel's Foreign Ministry.

Sudan follows the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain—unquestionably given the nod by Saudi Arabia—and Morocco, which normalised relations with Israel under the "Abraham Accords" brokered by the Trump administration and Egypt and Jordan, which recognised Israel in 1979 and 1994 respectively. These agreements, establishing diplomatic and trade relations, ended the state of war and boycott by members of the Arab League since the establishment of the state of Israel, the Arab-Israeli War and the displacement of 700,000 Palestinians in 1948.

The agreements made visible their back-channel security, intelligence and commercial dealings with Israel and their repudiation of any commitment to the establishment of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital—based on Israel's full withdrawal from the territories captured in the 1967 Arab Israeli war—and a "just settlement" of the Palestinian refugee problem based on UN Resolution 194.

It was in Khartoum after the 1967 Arab Israeli war that the Arab League famously inaugurated its "three nos" policy in relation to Israel: no peace, no recognition and no negotiations. Now, as far as the Arab regimes are concerned, the Palestinians no longer matter.

While Sudan had accepted the Abraham Accords in November 2020, signing with the US in exchange for a package

of vital financial incentives, including Sudan's long-awaited removal from Washington's list of State Sponsors of Terrorism, it had not signed the agreement with Israel. Discussions stalled after the military's sacking of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and his transitional civilian government in October 2021, when the Biden administration suspended \$700 million in financial assistance to Sudan.

Cohen, speaking at a press conference Thursday, said that the visit to Sudan laid "the foundations for a historic peace agreement with a strategic Arab and Muslim country. The peace agreement between Israel and Sudan will promote regional stability and contribute to the national security of the State of Israel." The signing would "serve as an opportunity for the establishment of relations with other countries in Africa as well as the strengthening of existing ties with African countries."

Sudan occupies a strategically important location on the shores of the Red Sea, between Egypt and Eritrea, where it controls maritime routes. It borders on Ethiopia, one of Israel's most important allies on the African continent, whose leader Abiy Ahmed paid his first visit to Sudan since the military coup.

Under longtime dictator Omar al-Bashir, who was aligned with Qatar, Turkey and the Muslim Brotherhood and had supported Hamas, the bourgeois clerical group that controls the Gaza Strip, Sudan was subject on several occasions to Israeli bombings of convoys allegedly carrying weapons and ammunition to Hamas.

Al-Burhan, following his pre-emptive military coup in the face of mass protests against al-Bashir in April 2019, has repudiated Sudan's alliance with the Palestinians and Hamas, to secure security and trade deals with Israel. This was part of a bid to win favour with Washington, amid a deepening economic and political crisis. While he announced a framework deal in December, after months of protests and repression in which 120 protesters were killed—for a two-year civilian transition towards elections—it is widely viewed as yet another fraudulent cover for military rule and has been met with mass protests.

The US Biden administration is determined to sever Sudan's relationship with Iran, Russia and China, close Sudan's large Red Sea port of Port Sudan to the Russian navy, and strengthen its regional anti-Iran alliance.

The UAE, which has signed extensive commercial deals to open economic zones and ports in Sudan, and Egypt have welcomed normalization. Hamas condemned the move, which "contradicts the general Sudanese stance that is against the normalization of ties with the Israeli occupation state and supports the just Palestinian cause" and called "on the Sudanese leadership to backtrack on this decision that contradicts the interests of the brotherly people of Sudan and would only serve the Israeli occupation's agenda."

This latest normalisation deal deepens the treacherous role of the Arab bourgeoisie, which has now formally buried its own "two state" solution and confirms that the nationalist agenda championed by all sections of the Palestinian bourgeoisie provides no way forward for the decades-long struggle of the workers and oppressed masses.

On Thursday, Chad's President Mahamat Idriss Deby, who took power after his father, the dictator Idriss Deby, was killed by rebel forces in 2021, opened the country's embassy in Ramat Gan, a suburb of Tel Aviv, some 50 years after diplomatic ties were severed in 1972. Chad is a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), founded in 1969 after a fire in the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem apparently started by a Christian fundamentalist. Like the Arab League the OIC is ostensibly committed a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a boycott of Israeli products to pressure Israel into ending the occupation. In establishing relations with Chad, one of the poorest countries in the world, Netanyahu is signalling that the Palestinians do not figure on the agenda of either the Arab or Muslim states.

These developments come just weeks after the installation of the most far-right government in Israel's history, one that includes fascist and racist parties based on Jewish settlers, and ultra-Orthodox parties which seek to suppress not only the Palestinians but the more secular sections of the Jewish population.

It has stepped up Israel's already savage repression of the Palestinians in pursuit of its programme of accelerated settlement expansion and moves towards full annexation of the Palestinian territories illegally occupied since the 1967 Arab Israeli war. This was combined with imposing even more pervasive apartheid conditions for Palestinians, including legislation making it easier to disqualify Arab legislators, and provocations at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

Last year, 231 Palestinians lost their lives in extra-judicial killings at the hands of the Israeli military and settlers, the highest number since 2005. Some 35 Palestinians have already been killed this year. One factor in the massive raid on Jenin by the Israel military last month that left 10 dead and 20 injured—as well as terrorising the Palestinian population—was to provoke

retaliation by desperate Palestinians to deflect anger against the government outwards and demobilise the anti-government protests.

A key element in Netanyahu's expansionist plans at the expense of both the Palestinians and the Israeli working class is his bolstering of the government's powers—to be achieved by neutering the judiciary. This is in the service of Israel's plutocrats, ruling over one of the most socially polarised countries in the OECD group of advanced economies, raising the spectre of civil war.

The court "reform" plan has sparked mass opposition, with weekly demonstrations protesting the government's plans. Saturday witnessed the fifth such protest with widening participation across the country as tens of thousands took to the streets of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa and other towns and cities. Anti-occupation groups including Combatants for Peace, Machsom Watch, Peace Now and A Land for All, took part in a separate demonstration in Tel Aviv under the slogan, "There is no democracy with occupation."

Demonstrations were also held in some 20 cities in North America, Europe and Australia.

The recent events have exposed the twin political myths of the Middle East. First, the transformation of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation into a repressive adjunct of the Israeli state, and by extension US imperialism—imposing impoverishment of the Palestinian masses—refutes the notion that bourgeois nationalism, even in its most radical form of the armed struggle, could end the oppression of the Arab masses. Second, the emergence of a fascist government in Israel and the very real prospect of civil war shatters any conception that the establishment of a Jewish state based on the dispossession and removal of the Palestinian people could provide a safe haven for the Jewish people.

Bitter historical experiences demonstrate the failure of movements and programmes based upon nationalism, which serve the interests of a narrow social layer, the capitalist class, not the working class. The essential precondition for ending repression, poverty and war in the Middle East is the unification of the Israeli workers with their class brothers and sisters in the Palestinian territories and across the Middle East and internationally, to put an end to capitalism and re-organise society on a socialist basis. This is the perspective of permanent revolution fought for by the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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