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# THE ABRAHAM PEACE ACCORDS



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## THE ABRAHAM PEACE ACCORDS

September 2020 saw a historic shift in the Middle East with the signing of the Abraham Accords. Facilitated by US talks, representatives from Israel, the UAE, and Bahrain formalised diplomatic ties. This marked a significant expansion of Arab states recognising Israel, with the UAE and Bahrain becoming the third and fourth to do so. Morocco later joined the accords, while Sudan signed the declaration expressing its intent to normalise relations. The UK government endorsed these agreements.



The Abraham Accords are a series of agreements aimed at normalising relations between Israel and several Arab states. They represent a significant step towards peace and cooperation in the Middle East. The accords are named after Abraham, a revered figure in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, reflecting the hope for a future built on shared values.

The Abraham Accords are about more than just handshakes. The agreement also includes a statement that says all the involved countries believe peace in the Middle East is important. They agree to understand each other better, respect each other's rights, and allow people to practice their religion freely. This shows hope for working together in the future.

The Abraham Accords unfolded in stages. In September 2020, Israel, the UAE, and Bahrain signed the initial agreements after US-brokered negotiations. December saw Morocco rejoin the fold, agreeing to re-establish diplomatic ties with Israel. Sudan followed in January 2021, signing the declaration but with full normalisation still under discussion. Economic ties also flourished, with both the UAE and Morocco signing trade deals with Israel. The growing circle of cooperation was further highlighted in March 2022 when diplomats from these countries attended a summit in Israel's Negev region.

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Even before the Abraham Accords, normalising relations with Israel presented a challenge for authoritarian Arab states. These regimes often resorted to repression to silence dissent against such moves. For example, in 1994, Jordan's signing of a peace treaty with Israel led to a crackdown on protests and broader activism. This crackdown seemed to confirm the view of one analyst in 2001: that these regimes believed "peace and democracy would not go together."



This crackdown extends beyond just silencing opposition to the accords. Pro-Palestinian activism is often a central part of Arab civil society, and stifling it has a ripple effect. Activists who mobilise around Palestine often become involved in other social justice issues like gender equality and workers' rights.

Even without formal peace deals, Arab governments increasing cooperation with Israel has a chilling effect on dissent. For example, Saudi Arabia has been working with Israel on security issues for a while now. But back in 2016, when a retired Saudi general visited Israel, there was a big public backlash. A group called "Saudis Against Normalisation" got a lot of people to sign a petition against the visit, including many well-known Saudi thinkers.



However, within a year, the group was shut down. Their online presence disappeared, and many who signed the petition were either forced to leave the country or thrown in jail.

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Considering the impacts within countries and the wider region, the Abraham Accords and their potential growth seem unlikely to bring about peace or stability, even soon. This is illustrated by a recent meeting between Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and his Libyan counterpart, Najla el-Mangoush.



The meeting, intended to be secret discussions about establishing normal relations, sparked protests across Libya after it was revealed by the Israelis. The public anger was so strong that it even forced the Libyan government to accuse the foreign minister of a serious crime of betraying the country.

While the road to lasting peace may be fraught with challenges, the Abraham Peace Accord serves as a reminder of the transformative power of diplomacy and the resilience of the human spirit. As we navigate the complexities of our time, let us draw inspiration from this historic agreement and redouble our efforts to build a world defined by unity, compassion, and mutual respect.

#### *The Abraham Accords Declaration:*

We, the undersigned, recognize the importance of maintaining and strengthening peace in the Middle East and around the world based on mutual understanding and coexistence, as well as respect for human dignity and freedom, including religious freedom.

We encourage efforts to promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue to advance a culture of peace among the three Abrahamic religions and all humanity.

We believe that the best way to address challenges is through cooperation and dialogue and that developing friendly relations among States advances the interests of lasting peace in the Middle East and around the world.

We seek tolerance and respect for every person in order to make this world a place where all can enjoy a life of dignity and hope, no matter their race, faith or ethnicity.

We support science, art, medicine, and commerce to inspire humankind, maximize human potential and bring nations closer together.

We seek to end radicalization and conflict to provide all children a better future.

We pursue a vision of peace, security, and prosperity in the Middle East and around the world.

In this spirit, we warmly welcome and are encouraged by the progress already made in establishing diplomatic relations between Israel and its neighbors in the region under the principles of the Abraham Accords. We are encouraged by the ongoing efforts to consolidate and expand such friendly relations based on shared interests and a shared commitment to a better future.

Signed:

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## FIRST BAHRAINI AMBASSADOR TO ISRAEL ARRIVES IN COUNTRY TO TAKE UP POST



Khaled Yousif al-Jalahma, Bahrain's inaugural ambassador to Israel, arrived in the country to assume his duties, following the bilateral agreement reached to normalise diplomatic relations. A statement released by the state-run Bahrain News Agency heralded al-Jalahma's arrival as a significant stride in fostering relations between the two nations and their citizens.

According to a source the new ambassador tweeted: "The opportunity to fulfil His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's vision of peaceful coexistence with all nations is a privilege that I will hold in high regard."

In 2020, Israel and Bahrain inked an agreement to formalise diplomatic relations under the Abraham Accords, an initiative spearheaded by the United States. This landmark accord, which has also facilitated the normalisation of ties between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Sudan, and Morocco, marks a significant shift in regional dynamics and diplomatic relations in the Middle East.

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## ABU DHABI'S MULTI-FAITH COMPLEX



The United Arab Emirates officially opened the "Abrahamic Family House," a remarkable interfaith facility that hosts a mosque, a church, and marks the debut of the Gulf Arab state's purposefully constructed synagogue. Crafted by the acclaimed Ghanaian-British architect David Adjaye, the project seamlessly integrates diverse architectural styles inspired by traditional designs seen in mosques, churches, and synagogues worldwide.

Named in honour of the Grand Imam of Al Azhar, the foremost authority on Sunni Islam, the Imam Al-Tayeb Mosque is meticulously aligned towards Mecca. Its windows, crafted with intricate latticework known as mashrabiya, serve the dual purpose of facilitating air circulation, regulating light, and ensuring privacy.

The His Holiness Francis Church pays homage to the 13th-century monk St. Francis of Assisi, from whom the current Catholic pope derives his name. Positioned facing the east to greet the rising sun, its ceiling, constructed of timber, draws inspiration from the biblical and Quranic narrative of Noah's Ark.

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