

Could Morocco Help Negotiate between Israel and Hamas?

by [Mohamed Chtatou \(/experts/mohamed-chtatou\)](#)

Jul 26, 2021

Also available in

[العربية \(/ar/policy-analysis/hl-ymkn-llmghrb-tqdy-m-alsadt-fy-almfawdat-byn-asrayyl-whmas\)](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Mohamed Chtatou \(/experts/mohamed-chtatou\)](#)

Dr. Mohamed Chtatou is a political analyst and professor of education science at the University of Rabat. Chtatou is a contributor to Fikra Forum.



Brief Analysis

After the signing of the Abraham Accords, Morocco stands uniquely positioned to help with any negotiations between Hamas and Israel.

The latest bout of violence between Israeli troops and Hamas in the Gaza Strip between May 10 and 21, 2021 caused dozens of deaths on both sides, including some 59 children, and involved a level of intensity not seen for two years. It stands as one of the most dramatic recent episodes in [a more than 60-year conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.](#)

However, though part of a long-lasting trend of tensions and tragedy, this episode arrived in a unique regional context. This latest confrontation between Hamas and Israel marks the first such event after the signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020. The accords, which represent a newly formed economic and, in some cases, strategic set of relationships between Israel and Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Sudan and Morocco, under U.S. support, have therefore faced an initial trial in the form of May's clashes. Nonetheless, while critics may regard this violence as a mark against the Abraham Accords and their signatories, this latest fighting between Palestinians and Israelis has brought the importance of a sustainable two-state solution into the limelight, and participants in the accords, like Morocco, stand poised to make meaningful contributions towards that end.

Following the signing of the Abraham accords in the last half of 2020, Palestinians felt largely abandoned by their Arab peers while Israeli colonization of the West Bank and increased Jewish expansion into East Jerusalem went unchecked. For some critics of the Abraham Accords, the recent violence, a critical aspect of which was tension over evictions of Palestinians in East Jerusalem, highlighted the way in which Israel continues to displace and dispossess Palestinians, painting any positive diplomatic arrangement with Israel in a negative light.

Nonetheless, while Islamists in Gaza and the rest of the Arab world may hold this negative view, Sunni Arab supporters of the Abraham Accords are here to stay. Not only do the accords provide greater strength in checking

Iranian expansion in the region, but, most importantly, they create an economic association that will bring prosperity and wellbeing to all involved parties. In this sense, while Islamists may want a theocratic Sunni Arab world similar to Iran in its religious zeal, the majority of Arabs would prefer prosperity and stability.

Moreover, it does not appear that the recent fighting has precluded the possibility of Arab-Israeli cooperation. This fact was evident in Islamist party Ra'am's recent negotiations to enter the new Israeli government. In this incredible scenario, Islamist organization Hamas was showering Israel with ballistic missiles, sowing fear more than harm and threatening the enemy with Armageddon, while the Arab Israeli homegrown Islamist party Ra'am was preparing to assume power in the Israeli government. Writer Mohamed Khadra noted this dynamic in his recent [article \(https://ledesk.ma/enclair/comment-israel-veut-amener-hamas-se-plier-aux-accords-dabraham/\)](https://ledesk.ma/enclair/comment-israel-veut-amener-hamas-se-plier-aux-accords-dabraham/), "Comment Israël veut amener Hamas à se plier aux Accords d'Abraham (How Israel wants to get Hamas to comply with the Abraham Accords)", which appeared in the progressive Moroccan newsmagazine *Le Desk* in its May 27, 2021 issue.

As such, the spirit of the Abraham Accords is certainly alive, and in the long run, more Arab countries, even potentially "progressive" Algeria, may join in to share in the accords' economic benefits. For now, both the United Arab Emirates and Morocco are moving forward with the application of the accords. Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Yair Lapid has already made an official [visit \(https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/07/02/lapid-uae-israel-abraham-accords/\)](https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/07/02/lapid-uae-israel-abraham-accords/) to the UAE, and he is currently in the process of scheduling a [visit to Morocco \(https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-morocco-in-talks-to-hold-official-lapid-visit-to-rabat/\)](https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-morocco-in-talks-to-hold-official-lapid-visit-to-rabat/). Furthermore, Morocco is preparing to welcome its first Israeli tourists [as early as July 25 \(https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/direct-israel-morocco-flights-as-early-as-july-25-ushpiz-visits-rabat-673065\)](https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/direct-israel-morocco-flights-as-early-as-july-25-ushpiz-visits-rabat-673065), a much-needed boost to the Moroccan tourism industry after horrendous stagnation during the 18-month pandemic period. At the moment, Morocco is expecting [over 200,000 \(https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/israel/1622556415-israeli-carrier-israir-to-commence-flights-to-morocco-in-july\)](https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/israel/1622556415-israeli-carrier-israir-to-commence-flights-to-morocco-in-july) Israeli tourists for 2021.

Moreover, Israel and Morocco share a cultural connection that both countries are eager to revive. Almost a million Moroccan Jews live in Israel, many of whom remain emotionally and religiously linked to Morocco. On that note, the current Israeli government has four Moroccan Jewish ministers. Thus, Morocco is hoping that with time, thousands of Moroccan Jews, whose departure was regretted by Moroccans, will visit their homeland first, and invest in it later.

Now, as the dust settles after the most recent bout of Israel-Hamas violence, Morocco has positioned itself as a potentially effective actor in any future negotiations between Israel and Hamas. Even as Morocco pursues the implementation of the Abraham Accords without hesitation, Islamist elements in the country could still provide the necessary connections to make Morocco a trusted go-between for both Hamas and Israel.

After the fighting subsided between Hamas and Israel, senior Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh visited Morocco, along with several Middle Eastern countries, to meet with Moroccan Islamist politicians of the Justice and Development Party (PJD), which is currently in power in the Moroccan parliament. Haniyeh had talks with the Moroccan Head of Government Saad-Eddine Al-Othmani in his capacity as head of the PJD and was received by other political parties who celebrated his astounding "victory" against Israel. At the same time, however, the Moroccan government stated that the visit was "private" and that the King never received Haniyeh. Furthermore, while Haniyeh was visiting Morocco, the King officially congratulated Naftali Bennett for winning the Israeli premiership and a Moroccan minister from al-Othmani's cabinet flew to Israel to partake in an official activity there.

Now, with Mahmoud Abbas's political career seemingly headed for an abrupt end and Hamas's popularity on the rise, Morocco's multi-faceted relationship with both Israel and Hamas could be a useful tool for peace. Accordingly, as Egypt is negotiating the difficult details of a prisoner exchange between Israel and Hamas and Qatar is prepared to disburse the equivalent of half a billion dollars for the reconstruction of Gaza, Moroccan officials will try to convince Hamas to come to the negotiating table and make initial steps towards the possibility of a two-state solution.

Thus, while many Palestinians have relentlessly criticized the Abraham Accords because they seem to overlook their plight, it seems clear today that direct and indirect members of the accords may be uniquely capable of efforts to bring Hamas and Israel into negotiations for a lasting peace. Of course, any current steps would only be the beginning of a long and difficult process, but efforts in this new political environment after the accords could bring a new level of success. ❖

RECOMMENDED



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Saudi Arabia Adjusts Its History, Diminishing the Role of Wahhabism](#)

Feb 11, 2022

◆
Simon Henderson

[\(/policy-analysis/saudi-arabia-adjusts-its-history-diminishing-role-wahhabism\)](#)



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

[Podcast: Breaking Hezbollah's Golden Rule](#)

Feb 9, 2022

◆
Matthew Levitt

[\(/policy-analysis/podcast-breaking-hezbollahs-golden-rule\)](#)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Targeting the Islamic State: Jihadist Military Threats and the U.S. Response](#)

February 16, 2022, starting at 12:00 p.m. EST (1700 GMT)



Ido Levy,
Craig Whiteside

(/policy-analysis/targeting-islamic-state-jihadist-military-threats-and-us-response)