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Israel-UAE

Strengthening of normalization process of Israel after agreement with the UAE

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On 13 August the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Israel entered into a US-sponsored peace accord that further deepens the process of normalization of the colonial and racist apartheid state.

An American-Israeli delegation, led by President Trump's son-in-law and White House adviser Jared Kushner, flew from Tel Aviv airport to Abu Dhabi airport in early September, for two days of discussions on security, trade, scientific cooperation, tourism and visa procedures for future travellers.

A first in the Gulf

The UAE is the first country among the Gulf monarchies to normalize relations with Israel and the third Arab country to do so, after Egypt and Jordan. This agreement does not come as a surprise, however, as the two states have maintained (less and less) informal ties for years. Israel, for example, lent a hand with Emirati surveillance systems - such as Falcon Eye, a civil mass surveillance system in Abu Dhabi installed by an Israeli company. The UAE was also the Arab country most enthusiastic about Trump's so-called "peace plan", dubbed the "deal of the century", despite the disapproval and rejection of the overwhelming majority of Palestinians. The League of Arab States has stood out for its lack of reaction and has not condemned the Israeli-UAE deal. Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have accepted that Israeli planes fly over their territory to reach the Emirates.

Some Gulf monarchies, such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar have also maintained contacts with Israel since the 1990s, out of economic and security interests, but also, for some, because of a common hostility towards the Islamic Republic of Iran and a refusal to democratize the region. Qatar, for example, hosted an Israeli trade office from 1996 to 2000 and does not hide its contacts with Israel.

Bahrain goes with the flow

US Foreign Minister Mike Pompeo tried following the August 13 deal to convince other countries in the region to follow the Emirati lead, in a Middle East tour which took him to Sudan, Bahrain and Oman. This agreement is in fact being used by President Trump in preparation for the presidential election, to demonstrate these foreign policy successes.

For the moment, and after an initial refusal, only the Bahraini monarchy has established a similar normalization agreement with the State of Israel, which it did on 11 September 2020. Bahrain had already hosted the conference announcing the economic component of the so-called "deal of the century" in June 2019, and has not hidden since then its support for this diplomatic initiative, while in May 2018, the Bahraini authorities had affirmed the "right of Israel to defend itself", after Israeli strikes against Iranian positions in Syria. The Egyptian dictator, Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, hailed a "historic" agreement and an important step for stability and peace "which will make it possible to find a just and permanent solution to the Palestinian cause".

Economic integration

The Saudi kingdom, for its part, has expressed its refusal for the moment of any form of normalization with Israel without prior settlement of the Palestinian question, but without criticizing its UAE ally's agreement with Israel. Riyadh does not wish to directly and officially normalize its relations with Tel Aviv for fear of fuelling disputes among its population and to try to maintain an image of leader of the "Muslim powers".

This normalization process is also a means of strengthening the economic integration of the State of Israel into the Middle East. Over the past 20 years, Israel's Foreign Ministry has claimed to have helped more than 500 Israeli companies wishing to trade with Gulf countries, leading to millions of dollars in contracts, but all of these transactions took place in secrecy and with certain obstacles. Now that the way is clear, Israel may be interested in the UAE's hydrocarbon resources, while the Emirates are prepared to invest in the tourism and high-tech sectors in Israel. Quite symbolically, Abu Dhabi repealed a 48-year-old boycott of Israel following the agreement.

Refuse normalization

In reaction to this formalization with great fanfare of relations between the UAE and Israel, protests have taken place in the occupied Palestinian territories to denounce this agreement and reject the process of normalization with the State of Israel.

These new processes of normalisation confirm the necessity of linking the question of the liberation of Palestine and of its popular classes with the liberation and the emancipation of the popular classes of the region, against their ruling classes, and also against the different imperialisms, in particular the United States and Russia, as well as regional forces.

We must refuse this new process of normalization of the racist and colonial apartheid State of Israel, which involves major actors of the counterrevolution in the region, such as the UAE, and the others who will follow. We must affirm our internationalist solidarity with the Palestinian cause and the popular uprisings in the region.

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