

Will Sudan Be Next to Normalize Relations with Israel?

by Hugh Fitzgerald



In late-August I posted an article “Is Sudan Next?” where I discussed the possibility – the likelihood – that after the United Arab Emirates, the next Arab state to normalize relations with Israel was likely to be either the Sudan or Bahrain. At the time, most bets were on Bahrain, so naturally, wanting to go against the current, I plumped for Sudan. I was wrong. Bahrain turned out to be the first to follow suit, by agreeing to recognize Israel, which is not quite the “normalization” that the UAE offered, but it’s a milestone on the way.

In late September, the evidence suggests that this time, it is Sudan that will next be ready for its closeup. The story at [algemeiner.com](https://www.algemeiner.com) – from which I’ve excerpted a few paragraphs –

is [here](#).

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Sudan's leader, Sovereignty Council Chair Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, are likely to meet in the coming days in Uganda.

According to sources close to the Sovereignty Council speaking to the Arabic edition of i24NEWS, on Saturday, September 26, the Sudanese-Israeli Friendship Association will be inaugurated in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum.

The event, where media will be invited for coverage, will set off a normalization process between the two countries, sources told i24NEWS...

On Wednesday, Burhan returned to Sudan from the UAE, where he conducted talks with US officials on matters including Arab normalization with Israel, as per his statement.

According to the Sovereignty Council, the discussions were focused on removing Sudan from the US list of terrorism sponsors, as well as on peace in the Darfur region.

In a previous piece at [algemeiner.com](https://www.algemeiner.com) [here](#), the Sudanese in mid-August were already talking about their intention to sign a peace treaty with Israel:

Sudan's Foreign Ministry said the African country intended to sign a peace accord with Israel, following the normalization deal reached by the Jewish state and the United Arab Emirates last week.

"The Emirates' move is a brave and bold step and contributes to putting the Arab world on the right track to build peace in the region and to build sustainable peace," Sudanese Foreign Ministry spokesman Haydar Sadig told Reuters on Tuesday.

"I cannot deny that there are contacts between Sudan and

Israel," he continued.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu later praised the announcement, saying, "Israel, Sudan and the entire region will benefit from the peace agreement and will be able – together – to build a better future for all peoples of the region. We will do whatever is necessary to turn vision into reality."

Israel has cultivated relations with Sudan in recent years, and Netanyahu met with Sudanese leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan during a trip to Uganda in February.

Israel has cultivated relations with Sudan not "in recent years," but only since the dictator Omar el-Bashir was deposed in April 2019. It was after Bashir's overthrow that Netanyahu had his meeting in Uganda on February 3, 2020 with the chief of Sudan's Sovereignty Council, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan.

Immediately after the meeting, the Prime Minister's Office said in a statement: "It has been agreed to start a cooperation that will lead to normalizing the ties between the countries."

Why Sudan? Under the dictator Omar el-Bashir, Sudan seemed irredeemably hostile to Israel. El-Bashir offered refuge, secure training facilities, and weapons to Hamas fighters. He beamingly played host to Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal. Indeed, under El-Bashir the Sudan was Hamas's best friend in Africa. And Israel treated it accordingly. On October 23, 2012, Israel bombed the Yarmouk munitions factory and warehouse in Khartoum, where weapons were being held for shipment to Hamas. El-Bashir, undeterred, continued to support Hamas until his last days in power. But once he was overthrown, Khartoum did a complete turn, and that is when talks with Israel began to be held in secret about the establishment of diplomatic relations and, more recently, about "normalization" of those ties.

We know what Israel would derive from such ties: ever greater legitimacy among the Arab and Muslim peoples, while the Palestinians, visibly unable to prevent Arab states from making their own arrangements with Israel, and having already consigned the UAE and Bahrain, and the Arab League as an institution, to the outer darkness, would be seen as yet again unable to prevent an Arab state from acting to further its own national interest. Each Arab state that follows the UAE's lead makes it easier for the next one to go and do likewise. The example of the UAE made it easier for Bahrain. The examples of both the UAE and Bahrain make it easier for Sudan to join the ever-lengthening list. And if Sudan normalizes relations with Israel, in a few weeks, can Oman be far behind? And then what about Mauritania? Or Morocco? Or Tunisia? A string of diplomatic victories for Israel and diplomatic defeats for the increasingly frantic Palestinian Authority, with Mahmoud Abbas beside himself with spittle-flecked fury.

What's in it for the Sudan? First, there is a powerful message that such normalization with Israel would send to the West and especially to the United States. The days of a Hamas-supporting Sudan, eager to supply weapons to the terror group, are well and truly over. Sudan is ready to again be a part of the comity of nations. And what better way to demonstrate it than by removing Sudan from the list of state sponsors of terrorism – which it has not been since the overthrow of Omar al-Bashir – and for Sudan, in turn, leaving behind the “Three No's of Khartoum” and normalizing relations with the Jewish state?

What else does the Sudan hope for? It is badly in need of both aid and investment, and the two most likely sources of such funds are Western countries and the rich Gulf Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which withheld aid when the Sudan was supporting Hamas. Now there is a chance – with Israel embraced and Hamas rebuffed – that those spigots will re-open.

And then there is Israel itself, which can directly help the Sudan with its most pressing problem: the agricultural sector. Israel is a world leader in water use, especially in novel irrigation techniques that make maximum use of water resources by drip irrigation that can now pinpoint not just individual plants, but particular parts of those plants. Israel is also a leader in desalination, another possible source of water for parched Sudanese farms. Israel now gets 55 percent of its domestic water from desalination, and that has helped to turn one of the world's driest countries into the unlikeliest of water giants. Israeli scientists have also come up with Watergen, a machine that manages to "squeeze" water out of the circumambient air. Finally, Israel leads the world in wastewater management. Nearly 90% of wastewater in Israel is treated for reuse, most of it in agricultural irrigation. Some of it is also sufficiently purified to be potable. All of Israel's technical prowess in this area could be of great benefit to Sudanese farmers.

Israel is also a leader in solar energy, and can be expected to share its knowledge and advances in this field with the Sudan. After all, Israel is eager to demonstrate to the Arab states the many benefits they can derive from good relations with the Jewish state. It has a stake in their economic success. Now Israel, off to a good start with the UAE with all kinds of deals being made between organizations and businesses and individuals from both countries, and to a lesser extent the same is happening with Bahrain, will now have a chance to show what it can do for the Sudan, and for any other Arab state now willing to give not only peace, but normalization, a chance.

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