Arab Perspectives on the Middle East Crisis

THE REGIONAL REPERCUSSIONS

Marwan Muasher, vice president for studies

# **Marwan Muasher**

VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDIES

Muasher is vice president for studies at Carnegie, where he oversees research in Washington and Beirut on the Middle East.

Amid the horrible loss of civilian live among both Israelis and Palestinians, the international community must take a step back and look at the root cause of this weekend’s terrible events. The world might have been surprised by the size of the Hamas attack, but it should not be surprised that it took place. The international community bears part of the responsibility for letting the conflict simmer and accepting the longest occupation in modern history.

No peace initiative has existed since 2014, when then U.S. secretary of state John Kerry abandoned his efforts to start a political process. The United States has since pivoted elsewhere, no longer pursuing peacemaking efforts. Meanwhile, the international community has limited its political involvement by expressing nominal support for a two-state solution without any plan to implement it. The world can no longer ignore the fact that as long as the Israeli occupation continues, more blood will be unnecessarily spilled by both sides.

Palestinians in Gaza have been locked in a prison for nearly twenty years, under siege by Israel, and without any political lifeline. An explosion of such a horrific nature was the direct result of a lack of any political horizon.

Recent efforts in the region have almost entirely focused on the Abraham Accords and on the false impression that peace is possible in the region without coming to terms with the Palestinians under occupation. That myth has now been shattered.

The history of the region has taught us that, out of crises of this magnitude, political breakthroughs can be achieved. The 1973 October War led to peace between Egypt and Israel. The first intifada, followed by the first Gulf War, led to the Madrid peace conference.

But this time, the situation is different. The international community is faced with a radical Israeli government that is not interested in any compromise, an ineffective Palestinian leadership that has been further weakened by the current events, and a U.S. administration that is preoccupied with presidential elections next year.

The stars are not aligned for a political initiative. Such an initiative needs the willingness of both parties to seriously engage, as well as the leadership of a U.S. administration that has so far been disinterested. Yet the longer the world continues to focus only on the here and now, the more it has to deal with casualties on both sides.

There is no military solution to this conflict. While everyone understands this basic fact, the insistence to keep ignoring the root of the problem—the occupation—can only keep spelling disaster.

**PALESTINE**

Zaha Hassan, fellow, Middle East Program



# **Zaha Hassan**

FELLOW  
MIDDLE EAST PROGRAM

Zaha Hassan is a human rights lawyer and a fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

t is too early to offer any confident assessment on the political objective Hamas had for its attack on Israel and on its civilians. Certainly, Israel will not go back to its previous modus vivendi with the Islamist resistance movement. The days of tolerance and tahdiyeh are over.

Of course, Hamas must have understood this when it planned the elaborate, multifront assault that inexplicably fell underneath the radar of Israel’s signal intelligence and network of informants. Now, the more pressing question is: what happens to the 2.3 million Palestinians living within Gaza’s breached walls and electrified fencing, in the territory often referred to as an open-air prison?

Palestinians in Gaza have only ever known forced displacement (most of them are refugees or descendants of refugees from 1948) or military occupation since the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Since 2007, as punishment for the Hamas takeover of the strip, they have been cut off from the outside world in every aspect of their daily lives—from seeking cancer treatment to being able to study abroad—by a foreign, occupying army. Now, the scenarios for them are likely to be even more unconscionable.

Some have suggested a plan to evacuate Gazans to Egypt in order to give Israel a free hand to root out Hamas. Whether the relocation would be temporary or would facilitate another mass Palestinian expulsion is irrelevant: Egypt would never risk its sovereign territory being compromised in such a way.

So will Palestinians be forced to bear the brunt of an operation involving hundreds of thousands of Israeli soldiers who are now amassing on the border? Will Israel reoccupy the territory indefinitely, or will it limit itself to decimating Hamas to allow for a return of the Palestinian Authority (PA) or some other new leadership?

If you ask PA officials in Ramallah, they’ll tell you there is no way they want any association with either the mass killing that has taken place in Israel or that is in the offing in Gaza. Nor are they keen to be a part of any U.S.-backed Israeli regime change. The already deeply unpopular PA has enough to contend with in the West Bank, with rampaging Israeli settlers, looming financial insolvency, and the rise of popular trans-factional militia groups that have become all that stand between Palestinians in the West Bank and an Israeli military facilitating plans for annexing their land.

Hamas has decided that it can’t be both a resistance movement and act as a governing body presiding over someone else’s foreign occupation. While the United States puts its full weight behind Israel, it ought to more fully consider the fate of Palestinians. America’s green light to Israel is sure to encourage it to cross some very bright redlines. This could very well turn the United States into Israel’s unwitting partner in the reoccupation of Gaza—and all that that means for U.S. policy in the Middle East.

Nathan J. Brown, nonresident senior fellow, Middle East Program

# **Nathan J. Brown**

NONRESIDENT SENIOR FELLOW  
MIDDLE EAST PROGRAM

Brown, a professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University, is a distinguished scholar and author of six well-received books on Arab politics.

Hamas’s tactical daring and Israel’s powerful response cannot mask the way that long-term drift by key actors has produced an atmosphere friendly to atrocities. No significant political player has had a strategy or even a clear policy for anything more than daily management of the problems posed by Gaza since the Israeli withdrawal over a decade and a half ago.

The horrific violence is not quite the inevitable outcome of that collective negligence, but it is a natural one. Each actor had real—if unenviable—choices, and each is now following years of procrastination and indecision with decisions that are both myopic and morally troubling.

Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip in 2007 with no idea of what it would do next. For sixteen years it waited for something better to come along; only now has it acted to upend matters. For the same period, Israel abandoned its stated policy of not talking with those it regarded as terrorists to negotiate—quite explicitly—a modus vivendi with Hamas (with the emphasis on the modus, not the vivendi). The point was not to solve anything but only to manage until tomorrow.

Palestinian leaders in Ramallah petulantly stood back, hoping that the territory would somehow be delivered back to them. The United States consistently and consciously treated Gaza as a tertiary issue while it mouthed commitment to nonexistent negotiations. When fighting between Israel and Gaza erupted, outsiders negotiated new ceasefires. When Israel’s blockade led to horrific results, the same outsiders could work to make them better than absolutely intolerable. Israel and most international actors were inured to the suffering that was being created, and Palestinian actors simply seemed to wait until their idea of justice would arrive, with Hamas periodically lashing out.

There is much to be fearful about now, but perhaps what is most discouraging is that the shock of recent events has not led any actor yet to show any sign of longer-term thinking. Hamas won a tremendous set of propaganda victories—and showed itself capable of massacring large numbers of Israeli civilians—without evincing any sign it knows what to do next. The Palestinian leadership in Ramallah appears even more hapless than before. Immediate Israeli actions are still unclear only in their extent. It is not clear whether or how Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s pledge to kill every Hamas member will be translated operationally, but it is the kind of signal from the top that has preceded mass killings in other settings. And the United States seems to be willing publicly to facilitate the impending Israeli campaign (and perhaps whisper quiet concerns about civilian lives in private).

There is no indication what each party intends the day after tomorrow. The result is a set of actors now mixing impulsiveness with inertia and treating that as policy.

**EGYPT**

Amr Hamzawy, director, Middle East Program



# **Amr Hamzawy**

DIRECTOR  
MIDDLE EAST PROGRAM

Amr Hamzawy is a senior fellow and the director of the Carnegie Middle East Program. His research and writings focus on governance in the Middle East and North Africa, social vulnerability, and the different roles of governments and civil societies in the region.

Facing the specter of an Israeli ground operation in Gaza that could lead many in the overpopulated strip to flee to Egypt, the government in Cairo has moved to protect its own national security and stability while pushing Israel and Hamas toward mediation to limit loss of life on both sides.

High-level officials, including President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, [have made it clear](https://www.reuters.com/world/egypt-discussing-plans-provide-aid-gaza-under-limited-ceasefire-security-sources-2023-10-11/) that Egypt is willing to use its borders with Gaza to get humanitarian aid to the strip and to transport injured civilians in need of urgent medical care to hospitals in Sinai and elsewhere, but it will not tolerate a massive influx of Palestinians in its territory.

To withstand [U.S. and European pressure](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/11/gaza-attacks-hamas-israel-war-us-holds-talks-on-safe-passage-civilians) to create safe corridors for Gazans to exit the strip before the Israeli army’s expected devastating ground operation, the Egyptian government has widely circulated three political narratives that capture the current popular sentiment: First, Egypt’s borders and territory are subject to its government’s acts of national sovereignty only. No one can impose on Egypt to receive Palestinian refugees in Sinai or elsewhere. Second, Sinai is an integral part of the Egyptian territory that was occupied by Israel for several years following the 1967 war, and the region suffered from Islamist terrorism until recently. Its current stability, which came at the cost of Egyptian blood, would be threatened by any external incursion. Third, Gazans should not leave the strip as much as West Bankers and Jerusalemites should not leave their land, as such an exodus could lead to the total dissolution of the Palestinian quest for self-determination and an independent state.

This stance on the Israel-Gaza war has been welcomed by Egyptian civil society and opposition parties alike. The United States and European governments are better advised not to pressure Egypt to accept policies that undermine its national sovereignty, security interests, and political stability.

In addition, the Egyptian government has offered to mediate between Israel and Hamas to stop the ongoing escalation. Egypt has condemned the targeting of Israeli civilians by Hamas and other Gaza-based factions and the targeting of Palestinian civilians by Israeli forces. In official statements, the government has warned both sides against committing war crimes. Both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the intelligence services, which enjoy good connections with both the Palestinian and Israeli sides, have moved to negotiate a ceasefire in order to avert the Israeli army’s expected ground offensive, to free kidnapped Israeli citizens and other foreign nationals taken hostage by Hamas, and to avoid more civilian casualties. However, Egyptian mediation efforts have not been fruitful so far.

In the medium and long terms, Egypt hopes to bring back peace negotiations based on the two-state solution and the principle of land in return for peace as the only viable strategy to achieve stability in the Middle East. While some Arab countries have signed normalization agreements with Israel—ignoring the Palestinian quest for an independent state and the horrific conditions in Gaza and other occupied territories—both government and civil society in Egypt have always maintained interest in safeguarding Palestinian national rights and in using the Egyptian-Israeli peace accords and stable bilateral relations to promote Israeli security and Palestinian self-determination. Egyptian efforts are also tailored to convince allies in the United States and Europe that mediation in the Middle East can only go through Cairo, not any other regional capital.

### LEBANON

Maha Yahya, director, Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center

# **Maha Yahya**

DIRECTOR  
MALCOLM H. KERR CARNEGIE MIDDLE EAST CENTER

Yahya is director of the Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, where her research focuses on citizenship, pluralism, and social justice in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings.

The horror show unfolding in Israel and Gaza threatens to spill over into Lebanon and other parts of the Middle East, which could pull other actors into the fray.

The carnage inflicted on Israeli citizens over the weekend has generated global support for Israeli retaliatory measures, which will further compound the devastation that over 2 million Palestinians who have lived under siege for nearly two decades have faced. Beyond the catastrophic humanitarian toll, the planned ground invasion of Gaza may lead to unforeseen consequences that will serve to further destabilize the region. This raises a series of questions.

Hamas and its regional supporters—namely Iran and Hezbollah—have scored a political win for themselves with the surprise attack on Israel. Hamas outshone a beleaguered and corrupt Palestinian Authority, led by the Fatah Movement, and upended an unsustainable status quo. How it will translate this win in the medium to long term is not clear. Gaza—and Hamas’ infrastructure—is being decimated. Even though the international community will have to negotiate with Hamas over hostage releases, the organization is unlikely to be accepted as a representative of the Palestinian people in future political negotiations. Iranian officials may be reveling in the attack and seeing it as an assertion of their ability to influence regional developments and derail bilateral peace plans, but how they will capitalize on it once the dust of battle settles is uncertain.

The expansion of the conflict into Lebanon could quickly transform into a regional war, as it may draw in Iran’s proxy forces from as far as Iraq and Yemen and entangle the region in hard-to-predict dynamics. For the moment, Hezbollah’s and Iran’s calculuses are not clear, even though both actors have stated that they will intervene militarily in the event of a ground invasion of Gaza. Current altercations between Israel and Hezbollah are taking place within what appears to be accepted rules of engagement, but this can change at any moment. Lebanon is already in the throes of multiple crises, and the Lebanese, for the most part, are hostile to getting embroiled in this conflict. Indeed, a new front in Lebanon would sow the seeds of the country’s destruction and make it very difficult for Hezbollah to operate in the aftermath. In short, Hezbollah would lose much of what it has achieved thus far. For Iran, a conflict between Israel and Hezbollah could weaken its main regional proxy and partner and degrade Tehran’s network of alliances. A perhaps less treacherous option would be an escalation in the Golan Heights, where the risk of a regional spillover is somewhat lower for all sides.

Beyond the need for vengeance, Israel is also grappling with several issues that will determine future developments. The unity government will be caught between maximalist rhetoric demanding the total destruction of Hamas and the difficulties of reoccupying Gaza, whether fully or in part. This may open the door to the expulsion of Palestinians, or some form of a population transfer, in a region where the forced exile of millions of people has been normalized in the aftermath of the Syrian conflict. Israel will also need to contend with rising unrest in the West Bank, as well as consider that any spillover of the conflict into Lebanon could draw in Iran, Iraq, the United States, and others. Hezbollah’s arsenal of precision missiles and battle-hardened fighters are also likely to cause significant damage to Israel’s infrastructure.

This conflict has undermined the decades-old fallacy that stability is achievable while the Palestinian population remains under brutal occupation. The international community must now stem the bloodshed while expressing empathy for both Israelis and Palestinians. This begins by recognizing the root causes of the conflict and the broader context of occupation and power asymmetry between the two communities, while seeking a more sustainable political opening as an exit from the carnage.

Mohanad Hage Ali, deputy director for research, Carnegie Middle East Center

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# **Mohanad Hage Ali**

DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR RESEARCH  
MALCOLM H. KERR CARNEGIE MIDDLE EAST CENTER

Mohanad Hage Ali is the deputy director for research at the Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center.

In Lebanon, the war on Gaza has unfolded alongside Hezbollah’s engagement on the country’s southern borders. Three main questions will dominate the next phase, regardless of when the conflict ends.

First, will the current rules of engagement with Israel persist? After the eruption of the Gaza conflict, Hezbollah and Palestinian factions attacked Israeli military positions, while Israel limited its responses to South Lebanon. Although Hezbollah might escalate further, the conflict has already shifted the rules of engagement relative to where they were a few weeks ago.

Back then, attacks were limited to missile launches that did not inflict casualties on the Israeli side. They were intended as warnings to Israel rather than actual military action. Today, this is not the case, and the attacks are reminiscent of the conflict intensity in the 1990s, leading to the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon in 2000. As the conflict in Gaza progresses, Hezbollah and its allies can either continue these attacks or upgrade their scale to inflict more casualties on the Israeli side.

The second question is whether Israel will act on its threats to Hamas officials abroad. Most recently, Israel threatened Ismail Haniyeh, the Hamas political bureau chief who resides in Qatar.

This question is significant for Lebanon, as it hosts a number of these leaders. Since 2019, as Hezbollah strengthened its alliance with Hamas with further coordination and training, some of Hamas’s leadership—including its number two, Saleh al-Arouri—moved to Lebanon. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad secretary general Ziad Nakhale resides in Lebanon too. Any Israeli targeting of these officials will certainly lead to a wider escalation with Hezbollah. The Palestinian militant presence in Lebanon is also politically contentious and will most likely dominate Lebanese political debates following the conflict, given its implications on security and the increased Western scrutiny of Hamas.

The third question is what role Lebanon will play in any upcoming political process on its borders. Hezbollah would likely attempt to use Hamas leaders’ presence in Lebanon to influence postconflict Palestinian politics. By now, further signs of fissures within Hamas itself are appearing, with nuances between officials in describing the alliance with Hezbollah and Iran. In the aftermath of the conflict, there might be two clearly separate Hamas narratives and factions: one coming out of Beirut, and another from Qatar and Türkiye. In addition, prior to the conflict, clashes occurred among factions in the Ain el Helwe Palestinian camp in South Lebanon and were attributed to rising Fatah-Hamas tensions. These tensions might continue to play out in Lebanon.

Even if the ongoing conflict proves to be more short-lived than anticipated, its impact on Lebanese politics and security will persist, as Hezbollah and Iran try to reshape the war’s outcomes.

### TÜRKIYE

Sinan Ülgen, senior fellow, Carnegie Europe

# **Sinan Ülgen**

SENIOR FELLOW  
CARNEGIE EUROPE

Ülgen is a senior fellow at Carnegie Europe in Brussels, where his research focuses on Turkish foreign policy, nuclear policy, cyberpolicy, and transatlantic relations.

The latest escalation in the Israel-Palestine conflict came at an inopportune time for Turkish foreign policy. After a decade of combative rhetoric that resulted in Türkiye’s regional isolation, Ankara had been in the midst of a recalibration effort designed to mend its tarnished relations with regional states, including Israel. Diplomatic relations were [fully normalized](https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-714920) in August 2022 after more than a decade.

Ankara’s first reaction to the unfolding tragedy in Israel was very balanced. The statement issued by the Foreign Ministry in the wake of the attack was carefully penned. It condemned the loss of civilian lives and the acts of violence. It also called on the parties to act with restraint.

In that sense, the reaction was very different compared to Türkiye’s actions in the recent past. The intention with this balanced messaging was to maintain a nonconfrontational stance in foreign policy, so as to lower political tensions with regional partners and Western allies at a time when the Turkish economy is in dire need of inflows of international capital. The political leadership had been on a charm offensive to the Gulf countries to get commitments to aid Türkiye’s ailing economy, and officials have made a clear effort toward a more positive engagement with Europe and the United States.

The escalation over Gaza threatens these prospects. The government will come under considerable pressure to change its tune, from both a pro-Palestinian public opinion and a range of domestic political actors. Even the main opposition party, the center-left Republican People’s Party representing a firmly secular electorate, has been supportive of Hamas, blaming the repressive policies of Israel for the attack. Meral Akşener, the chairwoman of the opposition Good Party, has been the sole political leader in Turkiye to describe the Hamas-orchestrated aggression as [terrorism](https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/aksener-denounces-hamas-actions-as-terrorism-186967).

With the impending Israeli ground operation targeting Gaza, which will inevitably lead to a larger scale of human suffering, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s government will find it increasingly difficult to maintain its initial position. If Ankara significantly hardens its rhetoric against Israel, it would find itself in opposition to the U.S. administration, which has which has essentially given Israel wide latitude to respond. As a result, Türkiye’s relationship with its major strategic ally is very likely to come under [further](https://carnegieeurope.eu/2022/05/19/two-turkey-experts-on-why-erdo-is-rejecting-nato-expansion-pub-87159) [stress](https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-between-turkey-and-armed-kurdish-groups).

However, Türkiye may have a role to play in preempting an even more perilous escalation, possibly by spearheading a regional diplomatic initiative that will be conditional on the participation of other key regional capitals. A critical first step has been Erdoğan’s move to rapidly initiate talks with Hamas for the safety and return of the Israeli hostages. But the real test for the Erdoğan government will be whether it will maintain its balancing act during the highly probable escalation in Gaza and the rising humanitarian cost.

### THE GULF STATES

Rafiah Al Talei, editor-in-chief, [Sada](https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/)



# **Rafiah Al Talei**

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, SADA  
MIDDLE EAST PROGRAM

Rafiah Al Talei is the editor-in-chief for Sada in Carnegie’s Middle East Program.

he fallout from the events of October 7, which Hamas has called “[Operation Al-Aqsa Flood](https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/10/8/there-is-nothing-surprising-about-hamass-operation),” will undoubtedly halt any negotiations for normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia or another Gulf state, at least for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, Operation Al-Aqsa Flood reaffirmed that all the normalization efforts by Arab nations cannot resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict or bring peace and stability to the region without the direct involvement of Palestinians.

For Israel and the United States, the normalization of relations with Saudi Arabia holds immense significance, surpassing that of normalization with Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan, and the UAE combined. This significance stems from Saudi Arabia’s economic influence and religious importance in the Arab world and the broader Islamic community. Furthermore, normalization with Saudi Arabia adds a unique dimension due to the potential involvement of two other Gulf states that were early proponents of trade cooperation with Israel: Oman in 1994 and Qatar in 1996. However, during the Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000, these two countries decided to close Israeli commercial representation offices. In recent years, both have restored some ties. With Saudi Arabia on the brink of normalization, all Gulf countries except for Kuwait will have political, technological, and commercial cooperation with Israel.

A statement issued by the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs on October 7 reiterated the kingdom’s concerns about the situation’s explosive potential, which has resulted from decades of continued Israeli occupation, the denial of Palestinian rights, and systematic provocations against Palestinian holy sites.

Doha, meanwhile, squarely blamed Israel for the current escalation, pointing to repeated raids on Al-Aqsa Mosque under the protection of the Israeli police. Doha called on Israel not to use this week’s events as a pretext for initiating a disproportionate war against Palestinian civilians in Gaza.

Muscat’s perspective is that the ongoing escalation is a consequence of Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestinian territories and its continuous attacks on Palestinian cities and villages. Muscat also called for a just, comprehensive, and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue, based on the two-state solution.

In the current climate, no Gulf country is likely to risk angering its population or inflaming anti-Israel sentiments in the Arab and Islamic world by pursuing normalization negotiations with Israel. Gulf Arabs feel that their governments should stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people and halt all forms of cooperation with Israel.

Yasmine Farouk, nonresident scholar, Middle East Program

# **Yasmine Farouk**

NONRESIDENT SCHOLAR  
MIDDLE EAST PROGRAM

Yasmine Farouk is a nonresident scholar in the Middle East Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Saudi Arabia’s support for Palestine has fluctuated since 2017, following a broad reconfiguration of Saudi foreign policy. Normalization of state relations with Israel and the sacrosanctity of the Palestinian cause stopped being taboos.

In the current conflict between Israel and Hamas, the pendulum is swinging back in favor of the Palestinians, at least on the level of official Saudi statements. The first [statement](https://twitter.com/KSAmofaEN/status/1710629609757086172/photo/1) on October 7 deemed the situation “a result of the continued occupation, the deprivation of the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights, and the repetition of systematic provocations against its sanctities.” In a later statement, the kingdom underscored its “[unwavering stance](https://twitter.com/KSAmofaEN/status/1712350125962489961)” in support of the Palestinian cause.

Meanwhile, Saudi’s tightly controlled public sphere tolerated the narrative [condemning](https://twitter.com/Adhwan/status/1711456206030586167) Hamas for its escalation—which was called counterproductive and [attributed on Iran](https://twitter.com/tariqalhomayed/status/1712139195228024876)—that seeks to block the Saudi normalization with Israel. By this [account](https://www.okaz.com.sa/articles/authors/2145460), the components of this normalization would have been more beneficial to the Palestinians than the October 7 attacks.

Saudi officials have systematically warned against U.S. and Israeli exaggerations of the progress on normalization. In addition to its rejection of any notion of Palestinian rights, the current Israeli government is against a crucial Saudi normalization goal: receiving the same treatment, support, and immunity as Israel on U.S. and international stages. Israel opposes Saudi nuclear and armament ambitions and views the kingdom’s normalization with Iran as a threat.

Riyadh is not switching back to normative idealism when dealing with the Palestinians. This is particularly the case when Hamas and other Islamist factions are at the forefront of the picture. Hamas’s political Islamist ideology, ties to Iran, Western designation as a foreign terrorist organization, and former leader’s [call](https://twitter.com/OrientNews/status/1711854935631904969) on Muslims to join the fight against Israel challenge Saudi Arabia’s national security, policy of disengagement from pan-Islamism, and animosity toward political Islam. Iran’s foreign minister’s [warning](https://www.ft.com/content/8376c8bc-4ce4-433b-912c-337bf2ca66e6) of a “preemptive strike by the resistance front” against Israel and the violent escalation on the Israeli Lebanese border are transforming the threat of a regional war into a looming danger. The resistance front includes militias in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen who already declared their readiness to join the war. Israeli and Western pressures on Egypt to absorb the forced displacement of Palestinians in the Sinai Peninsula threaten the political stability and national security of the country that diffused the 2011 Arab uprisings. The last thing that Saudi Arabia wants is such a regional disorder that disrupts the progress of its Vision 2030 megaprojects and development plans.

The Saudi leadership understands that the Palestinian cause still weighs in its domestic and international clout, in its bargaining with the United States, and its rivalry with other Islamic players, such as Iran, Qatar, and Türkiye. The Saudi approach to this rivalry is however more tilted toward regional consensus building. Most notably, the Saudi crown prince had his first call with the Iranian president since both countries normalized relations in March to discuss the war in Gaza—despite the Iranian leader’s not-so-subtle [message](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/irans-khamenei-says-normalising-ties-with-israel-is-betting-losing-horse-state-2023-10-03/) to Saudi Arabia as “betting on a losing horse” by seeking normalization with Israel.

For now, it seems that a pragmatic Saudi Arabia is not giving up on normalization with Israel, the Palestinians, or regional de-escalation. The West’s unwavering support to Israel, Riyadh’s vulnerability in case of an Israeli or U.S. military strike against Iran, and the human tragedy of Palestinian civilians are enabling Riyadh in its three-way pursuit.

### NORTH AFRICA

Sarah Yerkes, senior fellow, Middle East Program

# **Sarah Yerkes**

SENIOR FELLOW  
MIDDLE EAST PROGRAM

Sarah Yerkes is a senior fellow in Carnegie’s Middle East Program, where her research focuses on Tunisia’s political, economic, and security developments as well as state-society relations in the Middle East and North Africa.

The impact of the ongoing war between Hamas and Israel is exacerbating divides between Arab states over their relationship with Israel. In North Africa, reactions to the war reflect existing divisions that surfaced following Morocco’s normalization of diplomatic relations with Israel in December 2020. As the conflict continues to rage, however, the Moroccan-Israeli détente will likely be tested.

The Morocco-Israel normalization process has been lauded as a success. The countries now have direct flights, overflight rights, and increased economic ties, as well as cooperation across multiple industries including technology, agriculture, tourism, energy, and weapons procurement. Morocco is also the North African country most closely aligned with the United States—a major non-NATO ally and the only country in Africa to have a comprehensive free trade agreement with the United States.

So the Moroccan government’s relatively muted response to the war should not be surprising. King Mohammad VI called for an emergency meeting of the Arab League, which Morocco currently chairs, and the Moroccan Foreign Ministry has [pushed](https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2023/10/358139/palestine-israel-morocco-expresses-deep-concern-calls-for-de-escalation) for de-escalation and condemned the targeting of civilians on all sides. But the Moroccan government has failed to issue the full-throated rhetoric against Israel’s actions coming out of its North African neighbors.

The Moroccan public, meanwhile, has been far more vocal, taking to the streets in support of Palestinians and[calling](https://www.newarab.com/news/moroccans-protest-en-masse-against-normalisation-israel) for an end to normalization with Israel. And the Islamist Justice and Development Party has praised the Hamas attacks.