

MEMMO

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Arab States Must Accept Israel, Reject Radicalism

The Obama administration and Israel's new government are looking to the Arab world to play a positive, moderate role in facilitating Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Unfortunately, the late-March Arab summit in Doha, Qatar was a disappointment on this front. Arab leaders backed radical groups like Hamas and Hizballah and embraced Sudan's outlaw President Omar al-Bashir only days after the International Criminal Court issued a warrant for his arrest.

Arab leaders used the Doha conference to deligitimize and isolate Israel.

- The final summit declaration urged “all Arab countries to reconsider its economic and political relations with Israel and all kinds of normalization.” Host Qatar and Mauritania severed ties with Israel earlier this year.
- The declaration called on Israel to withdraw from territories that Israel captured from Syria in 1967, claiming that the land was part of Lebanon even though the U.N. has already certified that Israel fully withdrew from Lebanon in 2000.
- Arab leaders also said that Palestinian refugees would not be able to settle permanently in Arab countries, suggesting that they must be allowed to settle in present day Israel. Israelis from across the political spectrum and most objective outside observers have long agreed that resettling large numbers of Palestinian refugees in Israel would lead to the dissolution of the Jewish state.
- Even as the summit ignored an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court for al-Bashir—who is responsible for the massacre of hundreds of thousands of innocent people in Darfur—the declaration called for Israel's prosecution in international courts for its defensive operations in Gaza.
- Syrian President Bashar Assad stated at the summit that the Arab peace initiative proposed in 2002 “is suspended, and it is dead.” While the final declaration affirmed Arab nations' commitment to the initiative, it rejected “Israeli obstruction and procrastination” and called for “a specified timeframe” for fulfilling Israel's obligations toward the peace process. Such a statement hardly represents a serious or forward-looking way to advance the peace process and earn Israel's trust.



Arab leaders such as Syrian President Bashar Assad showered support on indicted Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir (right) at the recent Doha conference.

Arab leaders praised radical Islamist groups like Hamas and Hizballah while warmly welcoming al-Bashir.

- In the summit declaration, Arab leaders praised Hamas terrorism against Israel, saying, “We send greetings of pride and admiration to the Palestinian people’s valiant resistance against the treacherous Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip. We stress the need to support their steadfastness and resistance against this aggression.”
- While voicing support for the Palestinian Authority (PA), the declaration also expresses “respect for... the [Hamas-controlled] elected Palestinian Legislative Council.”
- The summit’s support for Hamas reflects Syria and Qatar’s continued backing of the terrorist group. Both countries maintain official Hamas offices; Qatar reportedly provides the group with millions of dollars each month.
- Although fearful of a nuclear-armed Iran, Arab states remained silent about Tehran, which continues its pursuit of nuclear weapons and is a key sponsor of Hizballah and Hamas.
- Upon al-Bashir’s arrival, Qatar’s Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem al-Thani embraced him and kissed him on each cheek, a traditional Arab greeting, and declared that he welcomed al-Bashir to the country.
- “We stress our solidarity with Sudan and our rejection of the decision” of the ICC, said the summit declaration. The United Nations has reported that al-Bashir’s genocidal campaign in Sudan has resulted in the deaths of at least 300,000 civilians.
- PA President Mahmoud Abbas also praised al-Bashir, saying, “We must also take a decisive stance of solidarity alongside fraternal Sudan and President Omar al-Bashir.”

The Arab states need to accept Israel’s right to exist and reject terrorism, extremism and genocide to bolster peace efforts.

- To facilitate peace efforts between Palestinians and Israelis, Arab states must begin to prepare their own people for peace with Israel by recognizing Israel’s right to exist, ending their decades-old boycott of Israel and opening diplomatic and economic ties with Israel.
- Rather than honor a genocidal dictator, Arab and Palestinian leaders should condemn, reject and isolate al-Bashir and other perpetrators of wanton violence if they are truly committed to peacefully settling the Israel-Arab conflict.
- Arab leaders, who routinely warn privately of the danger of a nuclear-armed Iran, need to speak out and back international efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability.
- The Arab states also need to back up their public support for the legitimate Palestinian leadership with tangible financial support to help bolster the Palestinian economy and to provide it with the political support needed to make the tough decisions necessary to reach an agreement with Israel.