The Israeli-Hamas War and Jordanian-Israeli Relations

King Abdullah II on board a military operation to drop humanitarian aid over the southern Gaza strip. Jordan Public Security’s Facebook Page.

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The Israeli-Hamas War and its Effect on Jordanian-Israeli Relations

Hamas’ October 7th attack on Israel and the heightening of tension between Israel and Hamas led to rising protests within Jordan. While Jordanian officials called for accountability from Israel for the widespread carnage in Gaza, Jordan has not taken significant action against Israel. The conflict in Gaza places Jordan in a particularly precarious position, as the Kingdom has been at peace with Israel since 1994. Amman continues to hold close ties to Washington, yet sixty percent of the population has Palestinian roots. The Hashemite Kingdom hosts an estimated two million Palestinian refugees.

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Jordan’s sympathy lies with Palestine. Since October 2023, protesters have been rallying outside of the Israeli Embassy in Amman and the Jordanian public demands Jordan end its decades-old peace treaty with Israel.³ While Jordanian officials condemn Israel’s actions in Gaza and publicize humanitarian efforts, Amman has yet to appease protesters.

In October 2023, the Foreign Minister of Jordan, Ayman Safadi, addressed the United Nations Security Council, the point of his message was to denounce the escalation of violence, believing this would only lead to persisting resentment. The Jordanian Minister called for a ceasefire and accountability from Israel. Accountability, as the Foreign Minister defined it, meant “all that is being done in violation of international law should not be allowed to pass.” Safadi

stated, “I think the key thing here is that I think to make sure that Israel joins all of us who want peace and work with us for peace and move on with that track.”

In recent years, Jordan and Israel have worked to ease tension and increase cooperation. In November 2021, Jordan and Israel signed an agreement that would allow Israel to buy energy from solar farms in Jordan, in exchange for water from an Israeli desalination plant. Israel has been exporting freshwater to Jordan for three decades, as part of the two countries' 1994 Peace Agreement. In November 2023, Amman backed out of the water-for-energy deal with Israel out of protest of Israel’s assault on Gaza. The Jordanian Royal Family also levied harsh comments denouncing Israel’s actions However, by March 2024, Jordan reconsidered its decision, requesting an extension on the deal. On May 16th, Israel renewed its water-for-energy deal with Jordan for six months.

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The Royal Jordanian Air Force intercepted and shot down dozens of Iranian drones flying through Jordanian airspace enroute to Israel overnight on April 13. By April 14th, the Revolutionary Guard in Iran labeled Jordan as a potential target. Leading up to the April 13th attack, Tehran warned Jordan that their actions were being monitored, the regime’s Fars News Agency reported that any intervention would make Jordan a target. Following the attack, the theocracy orchestrated a media campaign against Jordan, criticizing the Kingdom’s role in downing Iranian drones and allowing Israeli anti-missile systems to engage over the Kingdom’s territory. Jordan’s actions also gained criticism from Jordanian citizens, who feel this action was taken in defense of Israel.

In response to criticism of Jordan, Foreign Minister Safadi has tried to lessen Jordan’s connection to Israel, stating, “There was imminent danger of drones or missiles falling in Jordan, and the Jordanian Armed Forces dealt with this danger appropriately.” Safadi also said, “We will not permit anyone to jeopardize the security of Jordan and the Jordanians … This is a matter of principle and these are steps we have taken in the past. We took them yesterday and we will take them in the future, whether the source of the threat is Israel, Iran, or any [other] element.”

On April 19th, U.S. officials claimed an Israeli missle attack had been conducted in Iran by Israel. However, Israel did not claim responsibility. After the incident, Foreign Minister Safadi took to social media to condemn aggressive behavior, stating “We condemn all actions that threaten dragging the region into war… Israeli-Iranian retaliations must end.” Jordan’s primary goal is to create lasting peace within the region - as such, Jordan condemns the escalation of conflict between

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states through offensive measures. Any conflict between Iran and Israel will put Jordan in an increasingly precarious position. Jordan would be put into the middle of the conflict, geographically and ideologically.

Amidst the Israel-Hamas Conflict and rising tensions with Iran, Jordan is caught between safeguarding its interests and criticizing Israel’s actions in Gaza. Maintaining ties with Israel remains in Jordan’s interests, as the Kingdom relies on Israel for water and Israel is at the forefront of the battle against Iran.⁸

Despite continuing to prevail as a pro-West partner, Jordan faces frustration with its allies. Professor of political science at Appalachian State University who specializes in Jordanian Politics, Curtis Ryan, told Al Jazeera, “[T]here is considerable frustration that allies like the US support Jordan’s national defense, but continually counter its policy preferences and its advice, by failing to secure a ceasefire, failing to prevent regional escalation, failing to get more aid to Palestinians suffering in Gaza, and then even being the sole veto in the vote for Palestinian statehood at the United Nations.”⁹

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Sources


