

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman (MBS) Refuses to Stand with the US and Israel Against the Palestinians

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Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman (MBS) of Saudi Arabia is between a rock and a hard place. The Kingdom remains dependent on the US for security, while the US is supporting and supplying the weapons for Israel's slaughtering of Palestinian civilians. Added to the dilemma, is that MBS was very close to signing the accord with Israel, which is now on hold.

On October 7, just hours after the Hamas attack on Israel, the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a call for an "immediate halt to the escalation between the two sides."

Saudi officials had warned a ground war could be a devastating blow to stability in the Middle East. 

Senator Richard Blumenthal, Democrat of Connecticut was one of 10 senators who met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh.

"The Saudi leadership was hopeful that a ground operation could be avoided for reasons of stability as well as the loss of life," Blumenthal told The New York Times.

Israel launched a horrific air attack on the civilian population of Gaza following a surprise attack by the Palestinian resistance group Hamas on Oct. 7, putting Gazans under total siege and a blockade of water, food, fuel, medical supplies, and communications.

Over 8,000 Palestinian people have been killed in the conflict, including more than 3,000 children, and 1,405 Israelis. Hamas is holding about 200 hostages captured in Israel on October 7.

MBS had wanted to normalize relations with Israel, which is a key goal of President Joe

Biden, and the second most important goal of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after taking office. Netanyahu named his prime goals were increasing illegal settlements in the West Bank, in contravention of international law, and signing Saudi Arabia on to the Abraham Accords, which was a plan initiated by President Donald Trump.

After the attack on Gaza began, MBS immediately halted its negotiations with the US and Israel over the Abraham Accords.

MBS kept US Secretary of State Antony Blinken waiting for hours for a meeting in Riyadh. Finally, on the next morning, October 15, MBS made time for Blinken. Before the delayed meeting, the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement that read, in part, that

Riyadh “affirms its categorical rejection of the calls for the forcible displacement of the Palestinian people from Gaza and reiterates its condemnation of the continued targeting of unarmed civilians.”

Blinken’s tour of the Middle East was to persuade the leaders to condemn Hamas’ attack and to manage their citizen’s response to the horrific loss of life in Gaza at the hands of Israel, which is fully supported by the US government and military.

The icy-cold reception Blinken got demonstrated that the US and Saudi Arabia are miles apart on the issue of Israel’s revenge attack on Gazan civilians. Biden has waved the checkered flag at Netanyahu, while MBS is mindful of international law deeming Israel’s acts as collective punishment.

In the meeting, MBS called for Israel to halt military operations “that claimed the lives of innocent people,” according to a report by the Business Insider. He also called for the conflict to be de-escalated, which means that the US aircraft carriers off the shore of Gaza are setting the stage for a regional war.

Saudi Arabia has long been among the US’ key regional allies, but in recent years MBS has sought to steer a more independent course for the kingdom, forming closer ties with China, which led to a historic peace deal with Iran.

On Oct. 18, Saudi Arabia convened an executive committee meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The OIC, with 57 members, seeks to promote cooperation among predominantly Muslim countries in a variety of fields. With Iran in attendance, Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan decried the international community’s inaction and double standards in response to Israel’s military operations in Gaza.

Faisal also stressed Saudi support for the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which had been presented by then-Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, and was an initiative of Arab and non-Arab Muslim countries to normalize relations with Israel in exchange for Palestinian statehood.

On October 19, MBS met with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, who before visiting Riyadh met with Israeli leaders.

MBS “affirmed that the kingdom considers targeting civilians in Gaza a heinous crime and a brutal attack, stressing the necessity of working to protect them,” the official Saudi Press Agency reported.

MBS also “stressed the need to make all possible efforts to reduce the pace of escalation and ensure that the violence does not expand to avoid its dangerous repercussions on security and peace in the region and the world.”

On October 25, MBS stressed the necessity of stopping the military escalation between Israeli and Palestinian forces in the Gaza Strip, affirming his rejection of any forced displacement of Palestinians.

His remarks came during a phone call he received from President Biden, according to the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA).

“During the call, the military escalation currently taking place in Gaza and the efforts being made regarding it were discussed,” SPA said.

MBS stressed “the need to work immediately to discuss ways to stop military operations that have claimed the lives of innocent people and to reject targeting civilians in any way or targeting infrastructure and vital interests that affect their daily lives or forced displacement.”

He also stressed “the need for calm, stopping the escalation, and preventing the situation from deteriorating, affecting the security and stability of the region.”

MBS also called for lifting the siege on Gaza and adhering to international humanitarian law as well as allowing entry aid into the enclave.

Saudi Arabia is the most powerful country in the Middle East, and MBS recognizes that the issue of the occupation of Palestine is central to all Arab and Muslim people.

Biden needs assistance stabilizing the region now that there is war in Gaza, but the Saudis are unwilling to help this time. Although MBS is dependent on Washington for his country’s security, he will have to distance himself from any moves that could be seen as pro-US or pro-Israel. He will have to focus on his independence, which he has been cultivating.

MBS has a dream, and it is called Vision 2030, which is an ambitious road map to “new growth and investment opportunities, greater global engagement, and enhanced quality of life for our citizens.”

However, the plan depends on peace, stability, and networking with regional economies, which is one of the reasons MBS was willing to consider a deal with Israel. The Israeli attack on Gaza threatens the success of Vision 2030. This factor may see MBS playing a future significant role as a peacemaker if negotiations are opened to end the occupation of Palestine.

According to the UN, Israel is an apartheid state. According to Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and UN human rights groups, Israel has committed war crimes and crimes against humanity previous to the current Gaza war.

When US President Biden, Secretary of State Blinken, the US Congress, Netanyahu, and the United Nations sit together to discuss the war in Gaza, they are collectively blind to the “elephant in the room”. That huge monster they refuse to look at is the brutal Israeli occupation of the West Bank, and maintaining Gaza as the largest open-air concentration camp on earth.

American Patriot Patrick Henry said, "Give me liberty, or give me death."

Palestinians are speaking those same words but in Arabic.

This is the October 2023 Gaza War. If Israel is not forced to sit and negotiate for a lasting and just peace with Palestinians, then we will see the next war brewing now.

End the war, end the killings, end the occupation.

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