

Trump's Partner for Peace in the Middle East

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Global Research, November 14, 2024

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

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On November 12, US **President-elect Donald Trump** announced that he had picked real estate executive [Steven Witkoff](#) to be his upcoming administration's special envoy to the Middle East.

Witkoff is a New Yorker, Jewish, a successful real estate executive, and a personal friend of Trump.

While the exact details of what Trump wants to accomplish in the Middle East are yet unknown, he has repeatedly said he wants peace. However, to accomplish peace, he would need to partner with a different Prime Minister in Israel than **Benjamin Netanyahu**.

Netanyahu is not seen as an obstacle to peace with the Palestinians. However, his two radical ministers, **Bezalel Smotrich** and **Ithamar Ben Gvir** will never allow any peace plan for Palestinians. They demand all Palestinians remain under brutal military occupation, or be deported, or be killed.

"Steve will be an unrelenting Voice for PEACE, and make us all proud," said [Trump of Witkoff](#).

"With President Trump, the Middle East experienced historic levels of peace and stability. Strength prevents wars. Iran's money was cut off which prevented their funding of global terror," [Witkoff](#) wrote on X in late July.

The Witkoff announcement came the day after Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister **Mohammed bin Salman (MBS)** hosted the [Extraordinary Arab and Islamic Summit](#), which merged the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, on November 11 in Riyadh.

The summit issued a [resolution](#) covering the issues facing the Middle East, with the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people a central point.

The leaders in attendance were likely to have wondered about Trump's Middle East policy once he took office on January 20, 2025.

MBS demanded an immediate stop to Israeli military attacks in Gaza and Lebanon. He condemned the massacre committed against Palestinian and Lebanese people and called on countries around the world to recognize Palestinian statehood.

Ahmed Aboul Gheit, secretary-general of the Arab League said,

“The actions taken by Israel against the Palestinian people are undermining efforts to achieve lasting peace. It is only with justice that we will be able to establish lasting peace.”

Lebanon’s **Prime Minister Najib Mikati** told the summit attendees that his country was under an existential threat due to Israel’s war on Hezbollah, which has killed civilians and destroyed infrastructure not connected to Hezbollah.

The 79 members that comprise the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation include a few countries that recognize Israel and others opposed to normalization.

Experts have said the summit is a way to send a message to the upcoming Trump administration about what they want from Washington and what issues are a red line.

Trump has viewed Iran as an enemy and shared the view Netanyahu that Iran is the biggest threat to Israel, and the backbone of the axis of resistance to the occupation of Palestine, which was deemed illegal on July 19, 2024, under international law by the International Court of Justice.

Saudi Arabia normalized their relationship with Iran, following a momentous Chinese brokered deal signed in [Beijing in March 2023](#). Since then, the relationship has grown stronger and Iran’s President, [Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian, spoke with MBS](#) on November 10 praising the summit to be held, their joint relationship, and ways to further cooperate. Iran’s **First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref** attended the summit.

On the same day, the two leaders spoke, [General Chief of Staff Fayyad al-Ruwaili](#) of the Saudi Armed Forces met his Iranian counterpart, [General Mohammad Bagheri](#), at the Iranian Armed Forces General Staff Headquarters in Tehran. The continuing improvement in relations between the two political powerhouses in the region demonstrates they have rejected the ‘divide and conquer’ plans from the US State Department, which some dub the ‘Deep State’. This may dovetail with Trump’s plan to eradicate the ‘Deep State’.

The summit resolution called for a Palestinian state with the borders of June 4, 1967, conforming to UN resolution 194, and reaffirmed that East Jerusalem is part of Palestine.

The summit resolution called for Israel to be suspended from the UN, and called for a draft resolution to the UN in the 10th special session of ‘Uniting for Peace’, in which Israel will be labeled a threat to international peace and security after it fails to fulfill its UN membership.

The summit resolution condemned continuing Israeli airstrikes on Syria which have killed civilians and destroyed civilian properties, and called for the end of the Israeli occupation of the occupied Golan Heights of Syria.

In Trump’s first term in office, he gave the Golan Heights to Israel, in violation of UN resolutions and international law.

Trump had [cut the CIA program which spent billions](#) of dollars on the armed Syrian opposition in 2017. He also tried to withdraw the US troops and contractors in Syria, but the Pentagon somehow refused his order and explained that the US personnel were there to prevent an ISIS come-back. ISIS has never re-grouped, and the US troops remain just to

defend the Communist Kurdish separatists in northeast Syria.

In [2017, MBS cut support of the Syrian armed opposition](#) they had been supplying with weapons and cash since 2012, funneled through the Kingdom of Jordan. US President Obama and NATO attacked Syria for regime change beginning in March 2011. The Oval Office enlisted their allies Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Jordan to support the [Syrian armed opposition](#), which were not seeking freedom, but were fighting to [establish an Islamic State in Syria](#). Obama directed the US mainstream liberal media to spin the story that brave, freedom fighters in Syria wearing tennis shoes were battling a brutal dictatorship. Never mind that the fighters were Al Qaeda and the [Islam Army](#), and were [chopping off the heads of Syrian civilians, including children](#). The US liberal state media, CNN, was chief among the propagandists that kept the American people in the dark about who the US was supporting in Syria.

Military analysts have wondered why Israel is still bombing shelters and hospitals in Gaza since Hamas has been decimated. It is only because the US allows Israel to act with impunity. Perhaps Trump will change that, but only time will tell.

Political analysts on the Middle East have offered some tantalizing possibilities for what Trump might do. Trump values loyalty above all else. In the 2020 race, Netanyahu publically supported Joe Biden and urged the thousands of US citizens living in Israel to vote for Biden.

Trump may make demands on Netanyahu for a peace plan for Palestine, which Smotrich and Ben Gvir refuse, which will be followed by the collapse of the Netanyahu coalition. Netanyahu would then face prison for his corruption conviction, and a new Israeli government would be formed.

A new Israeli government, post-Netanyahu, might be willing to compromise for Israeli peace and security, and a two-state solution would be possible.

In 2022, **then Prime Minister Yair Lapid** said a two-state solution to the Israeli conflict was the right thing for Israel. Lapid is the current opposition leader from the centrist Yesh Atid party. In September 2024 he said he was for a [two-state solution and normalization with Saudi Arabia](#).

Since November 2023, Lapid has called for the downfall of the Netanyahu government, and there is broad support for a change in leadership in Israel. Trump might need that change to find a willing partner for peace in Israel and Palestine.

As of November 10, 2024, Israeli deaths are 1,139, Gazan deaths are 43,603, and West Bank deaths are 780. Israel has also killed more than 3,100 people in Lebanon.

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This article was originally published on [Mideast Discourse](#).

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Featured image: A cropped still frame from a video showing Steve Witkoff speaking on stage during a White House Opioids Summit held in the East Room on March 1, 2018 (From the Public Domain)

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