



PERSPECTIVES

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Palestinians See Major Threat in UAE Aid Shipment Via Israel

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Is the UAE beginning to open relations with Israel at the expense of the Palestinians? The PA thinks so, and is willing to deny its own people urgently needed humanitarian aid during a global health crisis to make their point.

On May 19, an unmarked cargo plane carrying tons of medical supplies, medicines, ventilators, and the like flew from the UAE to Israel's Ben-Gurion Airport. This was a humanitarian aid shipment meant to help the Palestinians deal with the coronavirus pandemic. It was sent by the UAE to the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Gaza Strip. (Video of the shipment arriving in Israel is available [here](#), via the Twitter page of Haim Omri.)

This was the first flight ever to occur from Abu Dhabi to Israel.

To the astonishment of Israel and the Emirates, the PA refused to accept delivery of the medical supplies sent to it by the UAE. According to Palestinian sources who spoke anonymously to the Arab media, this was because the UAE coordinated the arrival of the shipment with Israel and not with the Palestinians. That fact, likely combined with the optics of a UAE flight landing at Ben-Gurion, was deemed so unacceptable as to render the aid untouchable.

The Palestinian government does not want to function in any way as a bridge toward normalization of relations between Israel and the UAE, or anyone else for that matter. Anything that infringes on the Palestinian policy of enforced diplomatic isolation of Israel is to be categorically rejected, even if such rejection results in harm to the Palestinian people. This includes refusing delivery of 14 tons of badly needed medical supplies during an unprecedented global health crisis.

The unofficial Palestinian version of the story is that the UAE is trying to get closer to Israel at their expense. In the end, the aid went to Gaza, where Hamas members—who are usually more radically anti-Israel than the PA—received it willingly. Hamas didn't care where the shipment had landed.

This cartoon, [published](#) on the Twitter feed of Emad Hajjaj, illustrates the Palestinian position:



Hajjaj captioned the image with these words: “Emirati-Israeli normalization, under the guise of humanitarian aid, destroys Palestinian dreams of an independent state and does nothing to help them.”

On June 9, the UAE tried again to send humanitarian aid to the Palestinians. This time, the plane was clearly marked as a UAE national airline: it bore the words ETIHAD AIRWAYS as well as state symbols. The following photo comes from the Twitter feed of Roi Kais, who accompanied the image with the comment in Arabic that this was “unprecedented and historic”:



Once again, the Palestinian Authority refused the aid.

It is intriguing that when the Emirates sent assistance the second time, they did so in a more rather than less overt manner. Are we to believe the Palestinian version: that the UAE is indeed trying to open channels of communication with Israel under the guise of humanitarian aid to the Palestinians?

There are no formal diplomatic relations between Israel and the UAE, but many Israelis have traveled there. Former Israeli Minister of Communications Ayoob Kara has visited Dubai, as has former FM Israel Katz. Israeli minister Miri Regev accompanied a delegation of athletes to the UAE, where one of them won a gold medal—and the Israeli national anthem *Hatikva* was played over the loudspeakers during the medal ceremony. There is broad speculation that Israel sells weapons and technology to the Emirates, and delegations from both countries visit each other regularly.

The conduct of the PA in this matter has not won it many friends, especially in the Arab world. The Palestinian people have to pay—yet again—for their leadership's warped priorities. It is unfortunate that most of Europe continues to refuse to acknowledge the malpractice of the Palestinian leadership and continues to blindly support the PA.

This is an edited version of an [article](#) that appeared in Israel Today.

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