

# India's Position Regarding Operation al-Aqsa Flood and Israeli War on Gaza Strip

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## Introduction

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Indian politicians believed that rapprochement with the US could best be achieved through strengthening ties with Israel. Consequently, India quickly established diplomatic relations with Israel, leading to significant developments in various fields, particularly in security and military areas. As a result, the Palestine issue became a marginal concern for India. However, the relationship has gained significant attention in the Arab world with the onset of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, which this paper will explore.

## First: Key Aspects of India's Position on Operation al-Aqsa Flood

In the early hours of Operation al-Aqsa Flood on 7/10/2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted a strong condemnation of the Palestinian side, echoing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's rhetoric. It was later revealed that this statement was made without consulting the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, which released a more measured response the following day. This was followed by a series of actions aligned with the policies of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Notably, Indian authorities, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, imposed restrictions, including arrests, on demonstrators showing sympathy for Palestinians facing a genocidal war in the Gaza Strip (GS). Similar actions were observed in other states, including the capital, Delhi, suggesting that this was an Indian official policy. In contrast, Hindu right-wing extremists were permitted to express support for Israel's war and accuse Palestinian sympathizers of being jihadists and unpatriotic, despite widespread sympathy for Palestinians on social media.

At the media level, despite the reluctance of official authorities, particularly the Ministry of External Affairs, and their tendency to take ambiguous stances on the issue, mainstream media has generally maintained a professional and somewhat sympathetic tone towards the Palestinians.



## **Second: Unrestricted Collaboration**

It was notable that India's partnership with Israel remained unaffected despite Israel's crimes against humanity against the Palestinians. In fact, this partnership, particularly in military manufacturing, appears to have a direct impact on Israel's war efforts. Some drones used by Israeli forces were jointly manufactured with the Indian company Adani. Additionally, munitions originating from India were found in the field, with further discoveries made when Spanish authorities intercepted an Indian ship attempting to bypass the Houthi embargo in the Red Sea. India's military cooperation with Israel is well-established, having previously participated in the Israeli Blue Flag exercises.

Beyond military and security cooperation, India is also deeply involved in the economic sector. Following the withdrawal of Thai workers from Israel's agricultural sector after 7/10/2023, which severely impacted the Israeli economy, India stepped in to address the labor shortage by sending 100 thousand workers to Israel, where work is already in progress, in an environment that is dangerous, to say the least.

## **Third: Duality of Positions**

Regarding India's performance in international organizations, it has generally aligned with the majority of global countries and adhered to the "two-state solution," notably omitting any reference to East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state. This represents a significant shift in India's position. However, at the bilateral level, India continues to steadily develop its relationships across various fields. This is interpreted as a gesture of gratitude to Israel, which was the only country to supply India with weapons during the Kargil War with Pakistan. India has also sought to avoid antagonizing the US administration by not adopting a policy that contradicts the US stance on Ukraine and Palestine. It is noteworthy that some Arab positions, particularly those of the UAE and Saudi Arabia, are in alignment with India's stance.

## **Fourth: The impact of the Recent General Elections on the Indian Government's Stance on the Palestine Issue**

It seems that the decline in the ruling party's performance in the Indian general elections held in May 2024 did not affect its stance on the Palestine issue. This can be attributed to the persistent determinants that have shaped this



position from the outset. Key among these are India's desire to strengthen its relationship with the US, particularly in the context of countering China through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD), commonly known as the Quad, and its aim to enhance economic performance by attracting foreign investment. Additionally, there is ideological alignment between the ruling party and the Zionist movement. Most notably, the Arab push towards normalization and the establishment of relations with Israel has alleviated any pressure on India to reconsider its policies regarding Israel. Consequently, India finds itself in a favorable environment that aligns with its current position.

## Conclusion

India's policy has focused on strengthening ties with Israel at various levels, while maintaining formal and limited relations with the Palestinian Authority. Its approach to the Palestine issue has been through the framework of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Unlike Russia and China, which have established relations with Hamas and hosted Palestinian delegations in the name of reconciliation, India has not taken this route. The Indian press often deliberately conflates Palestinian resistance with terrorism, despite the fact that India has not officially designated any Palestinian movements as terrorist organizations. A ceasefire that aligns with Israel's acceptable conditions, which India views as a potential alleviation of the "Palestinian headache," would be in line with the policy of the current Indian government. This administration appears receptive to any solution supported by the US and the Arab countries. Such a stance enables India to uphold its partnerships with Israel, the US and its Arab allies while avoiding ethical dilemmas related to the beliefs held by some Indian elites regarding India's historical anti-colonial stance and its support for the Palestine issue. The possibility of India following the example of Russia and China by establishing open relations with Palestinian resistance movements seems unlikely. India's entry into the Arab world has been facilitated through countries that hold negative attitudes towards these movements, and India may be cautious not to antagonize both the US and the Arab leaders who have normalized relations with Israel.

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