

Introduction

Qatar emerged as a key player during Operation al-Aqsa Flood conflict, solidifying its role as the leading mediator in the region's crises and conflicts. Despite the potential challenges posed by the operation on 7/10/2023, given Qatar's hosting of much of the Hamas leadership, it effectively transformed this challenge into an opportunity. This bolstered Qatar's influence, strengthening its political standing on both regional and international fronts.

First: Determinants of the Qatari Position

The Qatari stance on Operation al-Aqsa Flood was shaped by several key factors, foremost among them:

1. Qatar's unwavering commitment to the Palestine issue and its consistent support for Palestinians in both the West Bank (WB) and Gaza Strip (GS). Alongside significant contributions to the Palestinian Authority's (PA) budget, the Qatari grant, ongoing since 2018, has been a crucial financial resource in bolstering the resilience of the people of GS against the severe blockade imposed on them since 2007.
2. Qatar's proactive policy and continuous ambition to enhance its regional and international presence and political influence have been evident through its strategy of serving as a mediator in various conflicts. Over the past years, this approach has solidified Qatar's reputation as a trusted and preferred mediator, particularly by the US, as demonstrated in its mediation efforts between the US and the Taliban, Iran and Venezuela. Its recent attempts to mediate between Palestinian resistance movements and Israel represent the culmination of a sustained record of diplomatic successes.
3. Qatar's openness to various Palestinian factions, its ability to maintain positive and balanced relations, and its hosting of Hamas's political bureau since 2012 have





significantly contributed to building strong ties with the movement. This, in turn, has bolstered Qatar's role and influence in the Palestinian issue, establishing it as a preferred mediator for Hamas, which has openly expressed appreciation for Qatar's efforts to support the Palestinian people and to manage constructive and neutral mediation during critical phases.

4. Qatar's strategic relations with the US have enabled it to play significant roles in the Palestine issue, including hosting Hamas leadership under Qatari-US agreements. In 2022, US President Joe Biden designated Qatar as a major non-NATO ally.
5. Qatar possesses many elements and tools of influence and soft power in the diplomatic, media and economic fields, and its success in utilizing its soft power efficiently has contributed to many political achievements.

Second: Aspects of Qatari Position Regarding Operation al-Aqsa Flood

Although Qatar, like other political actors, was initially taken by surprise by Operation al-Aqsa Flood, it swiftly adapted to the evolving situation. Key aspects of Qatar's response during Operation al-Aqsa Flood include:

1. Qatar condemned the Israeli war on GS, attributing the escalation and regional instability to Israeli policies. It also denounced the massacres and acts of genocide committed by the Israeli forces against the Palestinian people in both GS and WB.
2. Throughout Operation al-Aqsa Flood, Qatar consistently called for a ceasefire, de-escalation and the restoration of calm in the region. The country actively engaged in political and diplomatic efforts to halt the aggression against Gaza and played a prominent role in the joint extraordinary Arab and Islamic Summit held in Riyadh on 11/11/2023. Qatar also pushed for concrete actions to stop Israeli crimes. During his speech at the summit, the Emir of Qatar stated, "You all know the position and feelings of our people regarding what is happening.... we must take deterrent steps to stop the ongoing war crime, in a way that will also project the weight and leverage of Islamic states".



3. Qatar addressed the political and media campaigns that sought to incite against it and blamed it for the 7/10/2023 attack due to its hosting of Hamas leadership and financial support for GS with calmness and resolve. On 13/10/2023, Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani stressed that the “State of Qatar’s commitment to its role as a partner in peacemaking and a mediator in resolving conflicts should not be used to harm its reputation by leveling accusations that were proven to be false and the bad faith of its promoters exposed.” A statement from the Qatari Foreign Ministry on 16/10/2023 clarified that “Qatar is not a financial backer of Hamas. It provides aid to Gaza, and the destination of the money is crystal clear.” “Qatari aid to the Gaza Strip is fully coordinated with Israel, the United Nations and the United States”.
4. During the crisis, Qatar’s most notable official role was its active diplomacy and leadership in mediating a ceasefire and facilitating prisoner exchange deals between the Palestinian resistance and Israel, with direct US supervision and sponsorship.
5. The Qatari media played a pivotal and influential role during the war, effectively delivering detailed on-the-ground reports and covering political and popular movements both within and beyond Palestine. This represented a significant milestone in media coverage of the war’s developments. In response, on 5/5/2024, the Israeli government unanimously voted to shut down Al Jazeera’s operations in the occupied territories and confiscate its television equipment, citing allegations of incitement and threats to national security.

Third: Projections

Qatar’s numerous achievements in political mediation underscore the success of its strategy, which emphasizes building long-term relationships with diverse global actors. This approach has afforded Qatar significant leverage, enabling it to effectively mediate many crucial issues. Moving forward, Qatar is anticipated to continue its strategic and active mediation efforts, aiming to secure a ceasefire agreement in GS, despite the obstacles posed by Benjamin Netanyahu's intransigence and his insistence on continuing aggression.



The effect of possible regional escalation on Qatar’s mediation efforts is still unclear, especially if Israel ramps up its confrontation with Iran and Hizbullah in the wake of the recent assassinations of Hamas political bureau chief Isma‘il Haniyyah and Hizbullah military official Fuad Shukr. Additionally, the potential impact of a Donald Trump victory in the upcoming US presidential election on Qatar’s diplomatic and mediation roles in the Palestine issue remains uncertain.

* Writer, researcher and editor-in-chief of Assabeel newspaper, Jordan.