

How Arab States Helped Fuel Israel's Economy During Genocide



As Gaza bleeds under one of the most brutal and devastating military campaigns in modern history—its people starved, displaced, and slaughtered under a suffocating blockade likened to Nazi-era concentration camps—several Arab capitals have taken a profoundly contradictory path.

While many around the world looked to Arab nations as potential defenders of the Palestinian cause, expecting them to wield significant leverage, such as economic isolation and political pressure, the reality veered sharply in the opposite direction.

Trade between key Arab states and Israel not only continued after the war broke out in October 2023, but surged to unprecedented levels, according to detailed data from Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics.

This increase in trade, which included food, medical supplies, textiles, construction materials, agricultural products, and electronics, occurred while Gaza's children died for lack of milk, and its elderly withered from hunger.

Hospitals were bombed, medical staff detained, and essential medicines blocked, but Israeli markets remained stocked—thanks, in part, to Arab goods.

A Booming Trade with the Occupier

As Arab states failed the political and moral test of Gaza, hope turned to economic disengagement as a minimal response to Israel's ongoing atrocities. While fiery speeches and declarations of solidarity were issued across the region, trade volumes told a different story.

Between October 2023 and August 2024, the five Arab states that normalized relations with Israel—Egypt, Jordan, the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco—saw their total trade with Israel rise to \$4 billion, up from \$3.6 billion in the same period the previous year. This \$400 million increase starkly contrasts with global efforts to reassess economic ties with Israel in light of its war crimes.

The UAE accounted for the lion's share—two-thirds of total Arab-Israeli trade—reaching \$4.3 billion. Egypt followed with \$1.2 billion, a 290% increase in imports from Israel during the war. Jordan's imports rose by over 35%, while Morocco doubled its imports, and Bahrain registered a staggering 590% rise in exports and a 1200% spike in imports from Israel.

Exports to Israel ranged from food and clothing to precious metals, industrial equipment, fertilizers, and building materials—commodities critical to sustaining life and industry during wartime.

Integration Despite Atrocities

Even as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu openly mocks Arab governments and continues his brutal campaign against Gaza, Arab regimes persist in expanding economic ties with Tel Aviv. Beyond conventional trade, two major developments in 2024 highlighted this deepening relationship.

In April, the UAE-Israel Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement came into effect. It aims to boost non-oil trade between the two to \$10 billion annually, eliminating tariffs on 96% of goods. In May alone, trade jumped by 130% compared to the same month a year earlier.

Meanwhile, Egypt revised its natural gas agreement with Israel, committing to purchase 130 billion cubic meters of Israeli gas through 2040 in a \$35 billion deal—labeled the largest in Israel's history. Israeli officials praised the agreement for cementing Israel's role as a regional energy power.

Jordan, Morocco, and Bahrain also showed growing economic cooperation: Jordan's trade with Israel reached \$55 million (a 54% rise), Morocco's hit \$3.1 million (up 94%), and Bahrain's jumped 879% in early 2024 alone, despite public claims of cutting ties.

Wider Muslim World Also Boosts Trade

The surge wasn't limited to Arab states. Trade between Israel and 14 other members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation rose 11%, bringing total commerce with 19 Muslim-majority nations to \$7 billion—10% of Israel's global trade—helping ease the economic strain caused by the war.

Western Condemnation vs. Arab Complicity

While Arab states courted Israel economically, Europe moved in the opposite direction. Germany suspended arms exports, and Slovenia became the first EU state to impose a total arms embargo. The EU is now considering suspending Israeli access to innovation funds worth €200 million.

Ireland, Belgium, and Spain have called for trade agreement freezes. Irish lawmakers are set to debate banning imports from illegal Israeli settlements. Meanwhile, political parties across Europe are demanding stronger economic sanctions.

Covering for Israel's Red Sea Isolation

Arab normalization states have also stepped in to help Israel circumvent the Red Sea blockade imposed by Yemen's Houthis, who shut off Israeli-bound shipping through the Bab al-Mandab strait and the Suez Canal.

While ports like Eilat and Haifa ground to a halt, Egypt kept its Mediterranean ports open for Israeli-bound vessels. The UAE, through Saudi Arabia and Jordan, established a land corridor to supply Israel with essential goods.

These logistics efforts, alongside booming trade, paint a picture of systematic support—intentional or not—for Israel's war machine. These figures, corroborated by both Israeli and Arab government data, reflect a calculated betrayal of the Palestinian people and a refusal to confront Israeli impunity.

A Price Yet to Be Paid

Arab regimes clinging to normalization may believe economic ties will secure their strategic positions. But the price of trading over Palestinian graves will not be limited to Gaza. It will erode their credibility, their moral legitimacy, and—eventually—their own security.

Netanyahu, in a televised interview with Israel's i24 channel, left no ambiguity about his expansionist dreams: "I am on a historic and spiritual mission. I am emotionally committed to the vision of Greater Israel," he said, referencing territorial ambitions that extend into Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

In the face of such ambitions, Arab states remain vulnerable regardless of their trade agreements or normalization pacts. Betting on appeasement in the face of



open colonial designs is not strategy—it is delusion. And while Gaza may be the immediate battlefield, the entire region lies within the scope of Netanyahu's dream.

Those who betray Palestine today may find themselves the targets of tomorrow.

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