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By Bill Van Auken
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Trump stages sham Mideast “peace” ceremony on White House lawn

The signing of agreements between Israel and the Sunni Persian Gulf monarchies of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain on the White House South Lawn Tuesday was proclaimed by US President Donald Trump as the advent of “peace in the Middle East without blood all over the sand,” and universally hailed by the media as “historic.”

All of this inflated rhetoric is designed to conceal the reality that the sordid deals inked in Washington are only part of US efforts to solidify an anti-Iranian axis for a potentially world catastrophic war in the region.

The US-Israeli-Emirati-Bahraini signing ceremony was staged close to the anniversaries of two previous US-brokered “peace” deals: the September 17, 1978, Camp David accords signed by Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, and the Oslo Accords signed on the White House lawn by Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yassir Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on September 13, 1993.



President Donald J. Trump, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Minister of Foreign Affairs for the United Arab Emirates Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan signs the Abraham Accords Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2020, on the South Lawn of the White House. (Official White House Photo by Tia Dufour)

The proximity of the anniversaries and Trump's absurd preening and posturing Tuesday as the architect of the so-called "Abraham Accords" and a new era of peace in the Middle East recall nothing so much as Marx's adage: the first time tragedy, the second time farce.

The 1978 deal initiated the process of "normalization" of relations between Israel and the Arab regimes, all of which assisted in the repression of the Palestinian movement and the annihilation of its leaders. With the 1993 accord, the PLO abandoned any pretense of a struggle for the liberation of Palestine, instead establishing the corrupt Palestinian Authority, whose principal purpose is policing the Palestinian population of the occupied territories in collaboration with Israel's security forces.

The deals signed Tuesday—a treaty between Israel and the UAE and a "declaration" of intent between the Zionist state and Bahrain, which was dragged into the process at the last minute without any formal agreement negotiated—have nothing whatsoever to do with "peace."

In the first place, there has never been a shot fired in anger between the Gulf sheikdoms and Israel. Rather, the deals formalize what were already existing and barely concealed commercial, governmental and military ties between the venal and dictatorial Sunni Arab monarchies and Tel Aviv.

Among the most ludicrous features of Tuesday's ceremonies was the pretense that the Emirati and Bahraini foreign ministers—Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, a member of the UAE's ruling royal family, and Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, former head of Bahrain's viciously repressive security forces—represent the aspirations and interests of the Arab masses.

When Sadat carried out his historic betrayal at Camp David, he did so as the head of state of the most populous country in the Middle East—now numbering over 100 million—and as the representative of a regime founded by Gamal Abdel Nasser, the icon of Arab nationalism, which had been at war with Israel virtually continuously for a quarter of a century.

Nahyan represents an Emirati royal family that rules over a territory in which barely 11 percent of the population are citizens, with nearly 90 percent comprised of foreign migrant workers, most of them poorly paid South Asians who are brutally exploited under the shadow of dictatorial visa rules allowing for their summary expulsion.

As for Zayani, he speaks for Bahrain's Sunni monarchy, which rules over a country in which 70 percent of the population consists of disenfranchised, poor and brutally repressed Shia Bahrainis, with opponents of the regime subjected to arbitrary detention, torture and death.

In carrying out their US-brokered deals with Israel, the Emirati and Bahraini monarchies dispensed with the threadbare fiction that the Arab bourgeois regimes are defenders of the rights of the Palestinians against Israeli occupation and apartheid rule. This fiction was codified in the so-called Arab Peace Initiative launched by Saudi Arabia in 2002, which made recognition of Israel dependent upon Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, a "just settlement" of the Palestinian refugee problem and the establishment of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

While the Arab League had endorsed this initiative, when the Palestinians introduced a resolution condemning the UAE deal reached last month with Tel Aviv, the body voted it down.

If the House of Saud has not joined with its brother monarchs in the UAE and Bahrain in a "peace" pilgrimage to the Trump White House it is because of fear that such a naked renunciation of its own initiative and embrace of Israel could fatally undermine its claim to legitimacy, both internally and in the wider Muslim world. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that Riyadh gave its blessing to Bahrain—which is heavily dependent upon Saudi support—for its deal with Israel, and that the Saudi regime is itself collaborating closely with Tel Aviv, despite the absence of formal relations.

Palestinians demonstrated in the West Bank and Gaza Tuesday in a "day of rage" against the sham "peace" deals in Washington. Shawan Jabarin, the general director of Palestinian human rights organization Al-Haq, said that the deals laid bare "what has been clear to Palestinians for decades: Israel's illegal acts of annexation and apartheid will not deter those in power from the pursuit of their own interests, to the detriment, if not damnation, of justice, accountability and human rights in Palestine."

For his part, Trump thuggishly bragged about cutting off US contributions to assistance programs for Palestinian refugees because "they didn't say nice things about us," and

suggested that the deals with the UAE and Bahrain would escalate pressure upon the Palestinians to capitulate.

Netanyahu, like Trump, aimed to use the White House ceremony to boost his domestic image under conditions in which he faces trial on charges of fraud, bribery and breach of trust and is confronting growing domestic opposition amid soaring COVID-19 infection rates and an economic crisis that has left 21 percent of the workforce unemployed. He kept the language of the deal with the UAE secret until the signing, fearing that its verbiage about forswearing annexation of swathes of the occupied West Bank and supporting a so-called “two-state solution,” would alienate his right-wing base.

Netanyahu has insisted that annexation remains “on the table.” When he and Trump were asked about the issue at a press appearance shortly before the signing ceremony, the US president replied, “We don’t want to talk about that now.”

The idea that the agreements signed on the White House lawn were a step toward peace in the Middle East is belied by the continuing war threats by the US-led anti-Iranian axis in the region.

Teheran warned Washington Tuesday against making a “strategic mistake” after Trump threatened Iran over unsubstantiated reports that it was preparing to exact revenge for the US drone assassination in January of Iranian general and senior leader Qassem Suleimani by assassinating the US ambassador to South Africa. South African authorities dismissed the reports as baseless.

Trump had threatened Monday that any Iranian attack would be met with retaliation “1,000 times greater in magnitude.”

The Iranian navy reported last week that it had driven off US warplanes that had attempted to approach an area where Iranian military exercises were being conducted in the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

Military tensions have continued to escalate since Trump abrogated the Iranian nuclear accord with the world’s major powers in 2018, imposing unilateral sanctions against the Iranian population that are tantamount to a state of war.

Aerial bombings in the US-backed and Saudi-led war in Yemen continue to claim lives, with nearly 200,000 killed in the past five years and some 10 million people brought to the brink of starvation. One of the byproducts of the “peace” deals is the anticipated sale to the

UAE, one of the participants in the near-genocidal war against Yemen, of F-35 fighter jets and other advanced weaponry.

Meanwhile, Israel is continuing its own bombing raids against what it claims are Iranian-connected targets in Syria, while threatening to launch a new war against Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The chief impediment to peace in the Middle East is the protracted drive by US imperialism, under Democratic and Republican administrations alike, to assert its hegemony over the oil-rich region. Washington's escalating campaign for regime change in Iran is aimed at denying the country's resources and strategic position to China in preparation for "great power" conflict—i.e., a third world war.

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