

4th Europe-Middle East Forum: Synopsis & Policy Recommendations

On June 5th and 6th 2024, **ELNET** and its **Forum of Strategic Dialogue (FSD)** brought together distinguished leaders from Europe and the Middle East, including Israel, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Oman, and the Palestinian Territories. Together with the **Abraham Accords Institute** and **MENA2050**, ELNET hosted the **4th Europe-Middle East Forum** with around 50 participants from ministries, parliaments, and think tanks. The conference was held under the Chatham House Rule in an informal atmosphere in which the participants could engage beyond official talking points.

The discussion focused on different scenarios for the „**day after the Hamas-Israel War**“ with sessions held on the future of Israeli-Palestinian relations, growth and prosperity in the region, security and deradicalization, and education and coexistence.

With regards to the ongoing war, the **return of the hostages** and the **humanitarian situation** took center stage in the discussions. Most participants further agreed that any “day after scenario” for Gaza must include a **revitalized Palestinian Authority** while Hamas must be disarmed and forced to recognize Israel. Furthermore, unilateral steps regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be avoided. The process of **reforming UNRWA** with the long-term goal of replacing the agency with another UN entity was key to the thinking of most experts. Participants emphasized the need for Palestini-

ans to reform and deradicalize their education system, whilst it was stressed that Israel must also **combat radicalization** within its society and commit credibly to a diplomatic vision that meets Palestinian national aspirations. It was agreed that educational reform for Palestinian children would also have to take account of the devastating impact of the war.

In addition, the geopolitical context of the region, including the emerging **Russian-Iranian axis**, featured prominently in the discussions. The attendees agreed on the utmost importance of mobilizing an effective coalition against Iran and preventing Russia and China from creating instability in the Middle East. An **Israel closely integrated into the region** can only help to reach this goal, while a more active involvement of Arab partners in terms of political and military engagement could provide a **political horizon** for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There was further agreement that the immense economic and development potential from regional cooperation and integration should be leveraged to promote a **widening and deepening of the Abraham Accords**. This should include expanding them to Saudi Arabia and intensifying cooperation to address shared regional security, economy, development and infrastructure challenges and opportunities. A consensus emerged that European governments must also **confront Islamist narratives** in their own societies, especially among the younger generation, and guard against external influence from states and other radical actors.

Key Policy Recommendations:

- Prioritize the return of all hostages and humanitarian efforts in the Hamas-Israel War.
- Disarm Hamas and include a reformed Palestinian Authority in any “day after” scenario for Gaza.
- Avoid unilateral steps with regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- Reform UNRWA in the short term and replace it with another UN entity in the long term.
- Combat further radicalization in societies across the Middle East through reforms in the education system.
- Mobilize and maintain an effective coalition against Iran and prevent Russia and China from creating instability in the Middle East.
- Involve Arab partners in Israeli-Palestinian relations to provide a horizon for peace.
- Leverage economic potential to deepen cooperation in the Abraham Accords framework and expand normalization between Israel and its Arab neighbors.
- Confront the Islamist threat in Europe and guard against harmful external influences.