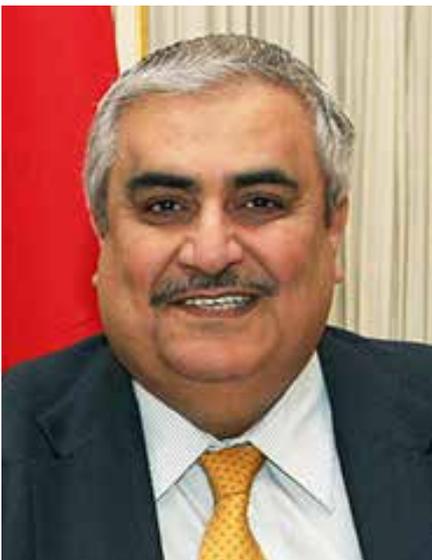
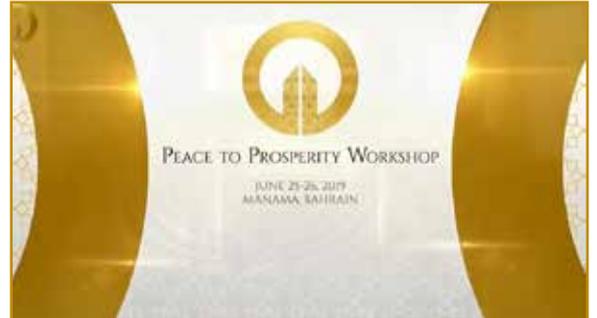




## Bahrain FM Urges Israel to Talk: “We want peace”

MANAMA, Bahrain – Bahrain sees the US-led economic workshop taking place in Manama this week as a possible “game changer” tantamount in its scope to the 1978 Camp David peace agreement between Israel and Egypt, the Gulf state’s foreign minister said Wednesday, also firmly backing Israel’s right to exist.



**Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa is a Bahraini diplomat who has served as Bahrain’s Minister of Foreign Affairs since 2005**  
*(CC BY 2.0, Wikimedia)*

“We see it as very, very important,” Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa told *The Times of Israel* on the sidelines of the “Peace to Prosperity” workshop. Khalifa also stressed that his country recognizes Israel’s right to exist, knows that it is “there to stay,” and wants peace with it.

He said the US-organized conference in Manama, which is focused on the economic aspects of the Trump administration’s Israeli-Palestinian peace plan, could be like Egyptian president Anwar Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem in 1977, which helped pave the way to the Camp David Accords and the normalizing of relations between Egypt and Israel. “As much as Camp David was a major game changer, after the visit of President Sadat – if this succeeds, and we build on it, and it attracts attention and momentum, this would be the second game changer,” Khalifa said.

In an interview in his suite at Manama’s posh Four Seasons hotel, Khalifa did not commit to normalizing diplomatic ties with Israel in the near future, but unequivocally affirmed Israel’s right to exist as a state with secure borders. “Who did we offer peace to [with] the [Arab] Peace Initiative? We offered it to a state named the State of Israel, in the region. We did not offer it to some faraway island or some faraway country,” Khalifa continued, referring to a Saudi-backed peace framework.

“We offered it to Israel. So we do believe that Israel is a country to stay, we want better relations with it, and we want peace with it.”

While Bahrain might be the only Arab state, besides Egypt and Jordan, to publicly acknowledge Israel’s right to exist, “we know our brothers in the region do believe in it” as well, he said. He encouraged Israelis to approach Arab leaders about any issues they may have with the proposal.

“Come and talk to us. Talk to us about it. Say...you have a good initiative, but we have one thing that worries us,” he said.

Jared Kushner, US President Donald Trump’s senior adviser and son-in-law, said this week that the White House’s proposal for Israeli-Palestinian peace will not follow the contours of the Arab Peace Initiative, but be closer to Israel’s position. Turning to Trump’s peace plan, Khalifa said he has not yet seen the political part

of the US administration's two-pronged proposal, but sounded cautiously optimistic about it. "We ...hope that this political plan will also be attractive to everybody," he said. Asked about which elements of a possible deal Bahrain could get behind, he replied: "Whatever you can agree on with the Palestinians."

Speaking Wednesday at the conference, US Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin said he would like the White House's economic plan to be adopted by the international community. "This is a regional economic plan. Although Gaza and the West Bank are a major focus of this plan, it also includes Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon... it is very important that we focus on these economies as a whole," he said.

"Most importantly, we want an international consensus... We want this to become not a United States plan, we want this to become an international plan. Now that the plan is out there, we're looking for changes, we're looking for additions, we're looking for buy-in, and really as a next step that this becomes a collective" plan, said Mnuchin.

Mnuchin continued: "This is a plan that can very much be accomplished." *Times of Israel staff contributed to this report* (June 26, 2019).

***"How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1).***



*Jared Kushner opens the "Peace to Prosperity" workshop in Bahrain (YouTube)*

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