

# Brazil opens Israel trade mission in Jerusalem, short of full embassy move

Author:

Reuters

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JERUSALEM: Brazil opened a new trade mission to Israel in Jerusalem on Sunday, appearing to edge back from earlier signals it would follow the United States by moving its full embassy to the contested city.

The announcement came during a visit by Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro – an outspoken admirer of President Donald Trump who broke global consensus by recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital in late 2017 and moving the US embassy there last May.

Bolsonaro had suggested in January he would follow suit with the embassy. That could have been a boost for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who hopes to win a fifth term in an election next week.

But Brazilian senior officials later backed away from the idea, for fear of damaging trade ties with Arab countries.

“Brazil decided to create an office in Jerusalem to promote trade, investment, technology and innovation as a part of its embassy in Israel,” the Foreign Ministry in Brasilia said in a statement.

As with most other countries, the Brazilian embassy is in Tel Aviv.

“Obrigado (thanks) for opening a diplomatic office in Jerusalem!” acting Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz tweeted.

Netanyahu has sought to burnish his statecraft and security credentials during the election campaign in the face of a popular centrist challenger, former armed forces chief Benny Gantz.

**BOLSONARO: “I LOVE ISRAEL”**

Greeting Bolsonaro at Tel Aviv’s Ben Gurion airport, Netanyahu said he and the Brazilian leader would visit Judaism’s Western Wall in Jerusalem.

“I love Israel,” Bolsonaro said in Hebrew at the ceremony.

Brazil has not officially recognized Jerusalem’s as Israel’s capital. Most world powers say the status of the city should only be decided as part of a peace process with the Palestinians.

Israel captured East Jerusalem along with the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 Middle East war. Palestinians seek to establish a state in the two territories, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Visiting Brazil for the Jan. 1 presidential inauguration, Netanyahu said Bolsonaro had told him that moving the Brazilian embassy in Israel to Jerusalem was a matter of “when, not if.”

But Bolsonaro’s economic team and the country’s powerful farm lobby have advised against relocating the embassy.

In an interview in February, Brazilian Vice President Hamilton Mourao, a retired army general, told Reuters that moving the embassy was a bad idea because it would hurt Brazil’s exports to Arab countries, including an estimated \$5 billion in sales of halal food that comply with Muslim dietary

laws.

Separately on Sunday, Israeli Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz said Brazilian state-run oil firm Petrobras would take part in Israel's latest tender for offshore oil and gas exploration.



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Israel reopens Gaza crossing as mediators push for deal  
Rockets from Gaza Strip hit Israel; 4 die at border protest

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## [Algeria announces new government with 27 members: official](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Sat, 2019-03-30 18:59

CAIRO: Algeria has announced a new government with 27 members, an official said Sunday.

Algeria's new cabinet will be a caretaker government with Nouredine Bedoui remaining as prime minister, private Ennahar TV reported.

Bedoui was appointed premier on March 11 after his predecessor Ahmed Ouyahia resigned following President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's decision not to run for a fifth term in the face of mass demonstrations.

Algeria's presidency has relieved many ministers of their duties, private Ennahar TV reported on Sunday.

Sabri Boukadoum was appointed as foreign minister, replacing Ramtane Lamamra in the caretaker government, state TV reported.

Tens of thousands have taken to the streets of Algiers for more than a month, saying they have had enough of the allegations of corruption, nepotism and economic mismanagement that have tarnished Bouteflika's 20-year rule.

On Saturday, Algeria's army chief of staff, Lieutenant General Ahmed Gaed Salah, renewed a call for the Constitutional Council to rule whether the ailing 82-year-old Bouteflika is fit to rule, opening up the possibility of a managed exit.

But his attempt to break the political impasse has failed to placate demonstrators, who reject military intervention in civilian matters and want to dismantle the entire ruling elite, which includes veterans of the war of independence against France, army officers, the ruling party and business tycoons.

Several close allies, including some members of the ruling FLN and union leaders, have abandoned Bouteflika, who has rarely appeared in public since suffering a stroke in 2013.

All private Algerian aircrafts are prohibited from departing from and landing in Algeria, a source close to the civil aviation authority and the private Ennahar television station said. It was not clear why the ban had been imposed.

Leading Algerian businessman Ali Haddad, who was part of Bouteflika's inner circle, was arrested at the Tunisian border early on Sunday, a close associate said.

"Yes, Haddad has been arrested," his associate told Reuters on condition of anonymity, without elaborating. Several Algerian television stations broadcast news on the detention of Haddad, a media magnate who helped fund Bouteflika's election campaigns over the years.

Bouteflika announced on March 11 he was dropping plans for a fifth term but stopped short of stepping down immediately and said he would wait for a national conference on political change. That only further enraged protesters.

Two opposition leaders supported the army initiative.

"The merit of this approach is that it responds to a pressing popular demand," Ali Benflis, a former head of the ruling FLN party, said in a party statement. "We are facing a political, constitutional and institutional crisis."

Abderazak Makri, head of an Islamist party, said he was against anything that threatened the stability and unity of the country or undermined the military.



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## [African Union to host Libya 'reconciliation' conference](#)

Author:

AFP

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Sun, 2019-03-31 05:39

TUNIS: The African Union will host a "reconciliation" conference in July aimed at uniting Libya's political rivals, AU commission chief Moussa Faki said late Saturday.

"It's an opportunity for the Libyans," Faki said during a press conference in Tunis, on the sidelines of an Arab League summit in the Tunisian capital. Announcement of the July talks in Addis Ababa followed a meeting on Libya

which included Faki, UN chief Antonio Guterres and the EU's top diplomat Federica Mogherini.

"It's high time that the (political) actors discuss the fate of their country," Faki said.

Libya has been mired in chaos since the 2011 ouster of dictator Muammar Qaddafi and a series of international efforts have so far failed to unite the country.

The United Nations is due to hold another conference next month in the central Libyan city of Ghadames, which is aimed at drawing up a "roadmap" to lead to elections.

Between 120 and 150 delegates are expected to attend the forum from April 14-16, UN envoy Ghassan Salame said earlier this month.

The UN backs a Government of National Accord in the capital Tripoli, while a rival administration in the east is supported by Khalifa Haftar and his self-styled Libyan National Army.

Reaching a lasting accord is seen as vital for creating stability in the country, as well as getting the economy back on track.



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Ship hijacked near Libya by migrants rescued at sea

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# Pope urges Catholics in Morocco to dialogue, not proselytize

Author:

By NICOLE WINFIELD and AMIRA EL MASAITI | AP

ID:

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RABAT: Pope Francis sought to encourage greater Christian-Muslim dialogue on Sunday, telling his flock that showing the country's Muslim majority they are part of the same human family will help stamp out extremism.

On his second and final day in Morocco, Francis told Catholic priests and sisters that even though they are few in number, they shouldn't seek to convert others but rather engage in dialogue and charity.

"In this way, you will unmask and lay bare every attempt to exploit differences and ignorance in order to sow fear, hatred and conflict," he said. "For we know that fear and hatred, nurtured and manipulated, destabilize our communities and leave them spiritually defenseless."

Francis has stressed a message of Christian-Muslim fraternity during his first trip to Morocco, a majority Muslim nation of 36 million. Proselytism is a prominent issue in religious discourse in the north African country, even though Christians, Muslims and Jews have coexisted peacefully here for centuries.



Pope Francis (R) blesses worshippers during a visit to the St Peter's Roman Catholic Cathedral in Rabat on March 31, 2019 . (AFP/Vatican Media)

After reaching out to the Sunni majority and Morocco's ever growing community of migrants from countries in sub-Saharan Africa on Saturday, Francis turned his attention Sunday to Christian minorities. His aim was to highlight their constructive presence in Moroccan life.

Francis visited a social center run by Catholic religious sisters that serves a poor Muslim community south of the capital, Rabat, with medical, educational and vocational services. The Temara center operates a pre-school, treats burn victims, trains women in tailoring and provides meals for 150 children a day.

Catholic catechism isn't taught at the pre-school.

"Their teachers are all Muslims and speak in Arabic and they prepare them on Muslim religion," said sister Gloria Carrillero. "We did not come here with the purpose of doing proselytism. We came here just to help."



Pope Francis meets children during a meeting with representatives of other Christian denominations at Saint Peter's Cathedral in Rabat, Morocco, March 31, 2019. (Vatican Media/Reuters)

Catholics represent less than 1 percent of Morocco's population and most are foreign-born migrants. Morocco also has between 2,000 and 6,000 homegrown converts to Christianity who are obliged to practice their faith privately because Morocco prohibits Muslim conversions.

These Moroccan converts often celebrate Masses in their homes and hide their religious affiliations for fear of prosecution and arrest. Yet many flocked to Francis' afternoon Mass in a Rabat sports stadium with the hope the pope's visit would compel Moroccan authorities to be more tolerant of religious diversity.

"With this visit, we want to tell the pope and the Moroccan society that we are proud to be Christians," said Moroccan Christian Adam Rbati, who was attending the Mass with his Christian wife and newborn son. "It might not change much, but it will certainly create the space for future positive change."

Francis touched on the issue of religious freedom in his opening speech to King Mohammed VI on Saturday, urging Morocco to move beyond just freedom of worship to true respect for an individual's faith.



Pope Francis blesses a child upon his arrival for a visit to the Rural Center for Social Services at Temara, south of Rabat, on March 31, 2019. (AFP/Vatican Media)

“That is why freedom of conscience and religious freedom – which is not limited to freedom of worship alone, but allows all to live in accordance with their religious convictions – are inseparably linked to human dignity,” he said.

In a speech to Catholic priests in the city cathedral Sunday, Francis drew applause when he told them they should not proselytize. The church grows, he said, when people are attracted to its message, witness its charity and engage in dialogue as part of a human family.

He called for prayer “in the name of this fraternity, torn apart by the policies of extremism and division, by systems of unrestrained profit or by hateful ideological tendencies, that manipulate the actions and the future of men and women.”







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## King Salman: We reject move to undermine Syrian sovereignty of Golan Heights

Sun, 2019-03-31 13:20

TUNIS: Any moves to undermine Syria's sovereignty over the Golan Heights should be rejected, Saudi Arabia's King Salman told the Arab League summit on Sunday.

US President Donald Trump last week signed a proclamation recognizing the Golan as Israeli, less than four months after saying Jerusalem is Israel's capital.

King Salman said at the Arab League summit in Tunis that he absolutely rejects any measures that impact on Syrian sovereignty over the Golan Heights.



“We reaffirm our absolute rejection of any measures that encroach upon Syrian sovereignty over the Golan, and we stress the importance of reaching a political solution to the Syrian crisis that will guarantee Syria’s security, unity and sovereignty and prevent foreign intervention.”

He also reiterated Saudi Arabia’s position supporting the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital. He said the Palestinian issue was a top priority for Saudi Arabia.



Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi said that the Golan Heights is occupied Arab land, and rejected the US decision over sovereignty of territory.

Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit said that the US decision is contrary to all international conventions.

He also said that Iran and Turkey have “worsened some crises and created new problems,” calling on Arab leaders to “unite as one force under one umbrella against the regional interventions.”

Meanwhile, Qatar’s Sheikh Tamim abruptly left the Arab League summit after it opened and did not give a speech, Qatar News Agency reported. He left the Arab League summit “in protest at criticism of Turkey,” Al Arabiya reported citing news websites close to Qatar.

Qatar’s Sheikh Tamim left the [#ArabLeagueSummit](https://t.co/v9QdEz7gyR) “in protest at criticism of Turkey” <https://t.co/v9QdEz7gyR>

[pic.twitter.com/8EhU8qPY9c](https://pic.twitter.com/8EhU8qPY9c)

– Arab News (@arabnews) [March 31, 2019](#)

Arab League spokesman Mahmoud Afifi said earlier that the 22-member bloc will aim to issue a proclamation affirming the international consensus that the Golan is occupied Syrian land.

King Salman praised the positive outcome of the Arab League Summit as he left Tunisia.

The king also met with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on the sidelines of the summit. During the meeting, they reviewed regional developments and various efforts aimed at achieving peace and stability in the region.



In their final statement after the daylong summit, the leaders affirmed that the Golan, a strategic plateau once used to shell northern Israel, is “Syria’s occupied territory.”

The leaders also called on Iran to stop interfering in the internal affairs of Arab countries and condemned the Houthis’ firing of missiles into Saudi Arabia.

The annual summit also addressed the issue of readmitting Syria as a member of the Arab League, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iranian interference in Arab countries, and the war in Yemen.

The pan-Arab bloc froze Syria's membership in 2011 over a bloody government crackdown on protesters.

Many Arab countries have recently renewed ties with the government of President Bashar Assad.









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