



# POLICY BRIEF

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ISRAEL-TURKEY RECONCILIATION

By Mitvim Institute and GPoT Center

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Engaged in [a series of policy dialogues](#) since 2012, Mitvim – the Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies and the Global Political Trends (GPoT) Center believe that after the signing of the Israel-Turkey agreement and the restoration of full diplomatic relations, both countries should consider the following policy recommendations in order to ensure successful reconciliation.\*

### A. Restore mutual trust

In light of the public relations damage caused in the last six years by mutual negative rhetoric, there is a lack of confidence on both sides. In order to rebuild the relationship, Israeli and Turkish leadership should support a number of measures that symbolically and substantively turn a new leaf in bilateral ties.

- Reestablish joint parliamentary friendship committees.
- Encourage public visits of high ranking Israeli and Turkish officials in both countries, in addition to bi-lateral meetings in other locations.
- Create a mechanism that will allow leaders to communicate directly.
- Set clear milestones for the reconciliation process, and be open to third-party support to the reconciliation process.
- Engage in confidence-building measures, such as Turkish assistance to the release of Israeli captives under Hamas control.
- Express mutual appreciation for the other country's role in regional affairs.

### B. Market the reconciliation agreement constructively

More than ever before, the Israeli and Turkish publics are actors whose interests must be taken into consideration when embarking on a new political narrative.

- Policymakers and politicians should underline the benefits of normalization to their respective publics even after an agreement is signed.

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\* Partnership between the Mitvim Institute and GPoT Center is carried out in cooperation with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

- Civil society organizations, think tanks, universities, and the business community should weigh in on the importance of the relationship.
- Media outlets should take a balanced approach to the relationship between the two countries, which also includes positive storylines.
- Policymakers, commentators, and civil society organizations should avoid “zero-sum”, face-saving statements regarding the agreement, and instead employ a “win-win” language that recognizes how both sides came away with their interests intact.

### C. Establish diverse official channels

The more Israeli and Turkish politicians and policymakers interact with one another, the more nuanced the level and dialogue and cooperation between the two countries can become.

- Create opportunities for inter-parliamentary exchange, and for dialogue between different political parties.
- Expand the points of contact between different government institutions in order to ensure that the relationship is not determined by a particular set of interests, nor limited to the attitudes of the standing heads-of-state.
- Share best practice techniques on migration, search and rescue operations.
- Renew and expand strategic dialogue between military and intelligence officials with respect to regional developments.

### D. Advance economic cooperation

Despite the diplomatic freeze since 2010, bilateral trade between Turkey and Israel has only increased, and now stands upwards of \$5 billion annually. With the discovery of offshore natural gas reserves in Israel, there is enormous potential to expand upon this economic cooperation.

- Consider the option of exporting Israeli natural gas to Turkey.
- Seek constructive paths for cooperation with regional actors regarding exploitation of available energy resources.
- Enhance the level of communication between Israeli and Turkish business associations.
- Encourage tourism packages for both countries’ populations.
- Arrange regular high-tech, tourism, and energy conferences with joint sponsorship.
- Establish a non-profit organization that subsidizes joint technological projects by Israeli and Turkish startups.

### E. Establish platforms for regional analysis and coordination

Engaging in dialogue on regional developments would allow Turkish and Israeli policymakers to better appreciate the interests and sensitivities of the other, and perhaps lead to the discovery of previously unknown mutual interests.

- Invest in a multitier committee that includes military, diplomatic, economic, and political representatives.
- Jointly combat violent radicalism and extremism, and identify opportunities for advancing regional cooperation and peace.
- Institutionalize a rapid response mechanism for regional humanitarian, environmental and emergency crises.
- Spearhead initiatives that engage with other actors in the Eastern Mediterranean.
- Each country can assist the other in facilitating broader engagement with regional and international actors. Turkey can assist Israel with the Arab/Muslim world, and Israel can assist Turkey with the United States.

## **F. Increase civil society cooperation**

Civil society organizations were not major players in the Israel-Turkey relationship in the past. However, today they can open wider channels of communication and insight into social and political trends. Most importantly, a stronger bond between Israeli and Turkish civil society organizations could help prevent diplomatic fallout in the future.

- Establish a bi-lateral governmental fund to allocate financial support for Israel-Turkey civil society projects carried out by NGOs, universities, and think tanks.
- Promote the establishment of the Turkey-Israel Civil Society Forum as an umbrella organization for facilitating cooperation.
- Foster more inclusive channels of Israel-Turkey cooperation that will bring together representatives of each country's diverse social fabric.
- Develop intimate exchange opportunities for Israeli and Turkish youth, university students, and civil society actors.
- Sponsor bi-lateral and regional interfaith initiatives.

## **G. Provide mutual conflict resolution support**

Faced with a number of complex regional challenges, Israel and Turkey can provide support for one another's peace processes and diplomatic growth, thereby increasing their stability (and that of the region as a whole). The major conflicts that Israel and Turkey are facing present challenges, however even these can be translated into opportunities for cooperation.

- Turkey can actively support the Arab Peace Initiative and promote it as a basis for conflict resolution between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.
- Turkey could play a mediating role between Israel and Hamas, also in the event of another round of Israeli-Palestinian violence in the Gaza Strip.