

Indonesia belongs in the Abraham Accords - the time has come for normalization

written by Asher Fredman | 07.06.2026

On May 25, President Donald Trump made clear that expanding the Abraham Accords is a key American national security goal. He explicitly called on Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan to join these historic agreements.

Achieving warm, people-to-people ties between Israel and these countries would be pivotal for peace and prosperity in the Middle East. Yet one critical nation was missing from Trump's list: Indonesia.

A series of recent economic, diplomatic, and political developments has increased the possibility of advancing cooperation and normalization between Israel and Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country.

The obstacles remain substantial, but with the right American commitment and support, there is now an opportunity to take Indonesia-Israel ties out of the shadows and into the sunlight.

The saga of Indonesia-Israel ties

Such an effort would not start from zero. Indonesia and Israel already maintain a "shadow relationship," including under-the-surface trade, defense, and tourism ties, often carried out through third-party hubs such as Singapore.

According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, total bilateral trade reached \$111.4 million in 2024. Other estimates, which include indirect trade through third-party intermediaries, suggest a volume closer to \$500m. annually.

Before Hamas's October 7, 2023, terror attack, there were limited civil society and interfaith engagements, and thousands of Christian Indonesians visited Israel for religious tourism.

In September 2023, Israel and Indonesia had reportedly agreed on a Memorandum of Understanding that would have seen the reciprocal opening of trade and interest offices in Tel Aviv and Jakarta, as well as Ramallah.

One of the longstanding obstacles to Israel-Indonesia relations has been the framing of Israel in Indonesia as an illegitimate colonial power.

The preamble to Indonesia's 1945 constitution declares that "all colonialism must be abolished in this world as it is not in conformity with humanity and justice."

Indonesia's current president, Prabowo Subianto, took a different approach in his September 2025 speech at the UN General Assembly.

While reiterating Jakarta's strong support for the Palestinian cause, he also explicitly recognized Israel's right to security, declaring: "We must also recognize, we must also respect, and we must also guarantee the safety and security of Israel. Only then can we have real peace."

On a practical level, Israel-Indonesia normalization would play a key role in advancing Jakarta's strategic "Golden Indonesia 2045 Vision," as well as additional vital national interests.

One of Prabowo's flagship national programs is a free-meals initiative for Indonesian schoolchildren, babies, and pregnant mothers.

This ambitious program requires producing, storing, and distributing nutritious meals for 83 million people across Indonesia's far-flung provinces every day.

Israel is a world leader in agricultural, water, and logistics innovation, and its training programs and technologies have helped increase agricultural productivity around the world.

Integrating Israeli technologies could help this crucial initiative achieve its goals sustainably and efficiently.

Indonesia also faces major water challenges. The World Bank has warned that without enhanced water security, Indonesia could fall short of its Vision 2045 target by up to 7.3%.

Israel's world-leading capabilities in desalination, water recycling, leak detection, and climate analytics offer highly practical opportunities for cooperation.

Additional key areas are cybersecurity, AI, and defense. With Indonesia's digital economy projected to reach \$300 billion by 2030 and efforts to downstream core industries at the heart of Jakarta's plans for economic growth, Israeli cybersecurity and AI-based threat detection technologies can play an essential role.

In defense, Indonesia's archipelago of over 17,000 islands makes maritime awareness and homeland security an existential priority.

The Abraham Accords have proven that while quiet security cooperation, as currently exists with Indonesia, is valuable, the mutual benefits of defense cooperation increase greatly once ties become open.

The UAE and Morocco now make use of advanced Israeli air-defense, counter-drone, and satellite technologies to boost their security.

In addition to President Donald Trump's announcement that expanding the Abraham Accords is a key US national security priority, several recent developments have created further incentives for normalization.

The February 2026 US-Indonesia Agreement on Reciprocal Trade links economic issues to national security alignment.

The US can signal that such greater alignment with key US frameworks, including

the Abraham Accords, can improve Indonesia's positioning for future national security-related economic, trade, and investment decisions.

A second important development is the progress in Indonesia's accession to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Such accession will require the unanimous support of current OECD members, including the US and Israel.

To be clear, Israel should not use the OECD file as a blunt lever, which would be counterproductive. Nevertheless, the US and Israel could link support for accession to concrete incremental steps, such as improved visa access, working channels, and reciprocal interest offices.

A third opportunity is Indonesia's readiness to play a key role in Trump's Board of Peace and the envisioned International Stabilization Force, for example, by contributing thousands of personnel and accepting the position of deputy commander.

Fulfilling such a role will require regular communication with Israel.

While Hamas's refusal to disarm or relinquish control of western Gaza complicates plans for deploying the force, working groups can already be established on areas ranging from security and logistics to humanitarian aid and development.

The significant obstacles to Israel-Indonesia normalization, from negative public opinion to bureaucratic hurdles, must not be ignored. Normalization must be framed properly and advanced discreetly until the time is ripe for public statements.

Ties should advance along an incremental strategic roadmap: from functional cooperation in the most critical areas to an expanded ecosystem of open business, professional, and civil society interactions; to initial diplomatic infrastructure along the lines of the 2023 MOU; and finally to normalization and integration in the spirit of the Abraham Accords.

If such a roadmap is pursued with determination, sensitivity, and courage, a substantial transformation in Israel-Indonesia relations is within reach.

Such a transformation would be a historic achievement of the Abraham Accords and would advance the vital interests of Israel, Indonesia, and the United States at home, across the Middle East and South Asia, and around the world.

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