

《Both Turkey and Israel begin process to normalize relations》

Israel's ties with Turkey fell apart in 2010, following the Mavi Marmara incident, when Israeli forces stormed a ship seeking to break the blockade of Gaza. 10 Turkish activists were killed in the incident. Now five years later, the two countries are getting ready to normalize relations and restore diplomatic ties. A move that would certainly have an impact across the region.

Israel and Turkey, once one of the strongest allies in the region. After five years of intense tension following the flotilla incident – it seems the two are eager to get back together. It's been announced by both sides that a deal for normalization is in the making.

"Though the deal hasn't been sealed yet, we are working on a draft. It is no doubt that the State of Israel and its' people are friends of Turkey. Our criticisms until now have been towards some of the Israeli governments' actions we don't approve.", AK Party deputy Chairman, Omer Celik said.

"This potential deal also comes at a critical time due to Turkey's ongoing crisis with Russia. Following the downing of a Russian jet by Turkish forces, Ankara's ties with Moscow have been strained which could have an impact on Turkey's energy imports.", Michal Bardavid reported from Istanbul.

It's been reported that this process could pave the way for a deal to build a natural gas pipeline from Israel's Leviathan field into Turkey – possibly a billion dollar project. A win-win for both sides.

The two countries also share common security interests in the region in the fight against terror – normalization of ties could also lead to cooperation on weapons supply and exchange of intelligence.

The deal would also require Israel to pay compensation to the victims' families – but in return, Turkey would be expected to drop all charges against Israeli officials.

Another major issue is Hamas. Though media reports claim Turkey would need to ban Hamas activities in Turkey – only a few days ago Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan welcomed Hamas leader Halid Meshal in Ankara. Some believe it's a political strategy for Erdogan.

"This deal has caused a lot of reaction from the AK Party and its' base supporters, more than they were expecting, so now they are trying to diffuse this reaction. The aim of the meeting with the Hamas leader was to show their supporters, Turkey and the world that 'we may become friends with Israel, but this doesn't mean we'll forget or stop supporting Hamas'". Ivo Molinas, the editor in chief of the Salom Newspaper said.

Yet the main challenge remains the Gaza blockade. Erdogan had earlier listed the lifting of the Gaza blockade as a precondition for normalizing relations. This could be the defining factor. Israel is unlikely to accept this demand, so it will depend on how the two allies maneuver regarding this topic to reach a deal that could end up being very beneficial for both sides.