

## Pakistan Envoy in Cairo highlights bilateral ties and regional peace



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Exclusive Interview by Khaled El-Shamy (Egypt)

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of Egypt as a country of great importance in the Middle East and Islamic world. He also noted that the conflict in Kashmir remains a persistent source of tension between India and Pakistan.

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## **Interview**

How do you view relations between Egypt and Pakistan, politically and economically?

Relations between Pakistan and Egypt are rooted in common bonds of faith, cultural affinities, and shared perspectives on regional and international issues. Egypt was among the first to recognize Pakistan, and resident ambassadors were exchanged in 1948. Pakistan views Egypt as a highly important country in the Middle East and the Islamic world, with both nations also being members of the OIC and D-8.

Pakistan's national poet, Allama Mohammad Iqbal, visited Egypt in 1931, meeting with intellectuals, leaders, and students. In 1946, Pakistan's founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah and its

first prime minister also visited Egypt, meeting political leaders and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar.

In later years, presidents, prime ministers, and ministers of both countries have exchanged visits.

More recently, leaders from both nations reaffirmed their commitment to transforming bilateral

relations into a strong partnership. Pakistan now looks forward to the visit of President Abdel

Fattah al-Sisi. With Egypt serving as a gateway to Africa and Pakistan as a gateway to Central Asia,

there is immense potential to enhance trade and cooperation for mutual benefit.

What is the volume of trade between the two countries, and what are the ways to increase it?

Bilateral trade, traditionally around \$200–300 million, rose to \$605 million in 2022 following

increased imports of mineral fuels from Egypt, before later declining due to global conditions.

Opportunities exist to expand cooperation in science, technology, IT, tourism, and housing.

In September 2023, the Pakistan-Egypt Business Opportunities Conference, organized in

collaboration with the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce, brought nearly 150 Pakistani delegates

to Cairo. Earlier, in January 2024, Pakistan also organized the Fourth Pakistan-Africa Trade

Development Conference and Single Country Exhibition in Cairo.

The bilateral consultation system includes a Joint Ministerial Committee addressing a wide range

of cooperation areas. Recent interactions between Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign

Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty have

reinforced efforts to expand bilateral trade.

Investment opportunities exist in textiles, sports goods, real estate, tourism, hospitality, and mining. Pakistan's Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) offers a one-window mechanism for foreign investors, while simplified visa procedures for 126 countries, including Egypt, further encourage investment. Pakistan's agriculture and clean energy sectors also hold major potential.

The IT sector in particular is rapidly expanding, with around 700,000 skilled professionals. With 60 percent of the population being young, Pakistan is well positioned to produce more engineers and developers for software and technology industries.

In your opinion, what is Pakistan's view of Egypt's role in stopping the war on Gaza, and is the idea of normalization with Israel impossible?

Since the outset, Pakistan and Egypt have consistently called for a ceasefire in Gaza. Both countries share an identical stance on the Palestinian issue at regional and multilateral forums. Pakistan has actively supported humanitarian assistance for Gaza in close collaboration with Egypt and values Egypt's crucial role in containing Israeli aggression and seeking a lasting solution.

Is the situation with India currently calm, and what is the solution to end the tension?

Pakistan adheres to the ceasefire with India agreed through President Trump's mediation. We

welcome his statements highlighting recent Indian aggression and his intent to mediate on the Kashmir dispute.

Pakistan's principled stance remains unchanged: Kashmir must be resolved in line with UN Security Council resolutions and the aspirations of its people. The Kashmir issue, an unfinished agenda of the subcontinent's partition, continues to fuel tensions. The Indus Water Treaty also poses risks that could escalate conflict between two nuclear states.

How did Pakistan defeat India in its last war?

Pakistan seeks peaceful relations, regional stability, and development for South Asia. While respecting the sovereignty of all states, we maintain minimum credible deterrence to preserve strategic balance.

Following the Pahalgam attack, despite Pakistan's offer for a transparent investigation, India rejected the proposal. Pakistan nevertheless responded with restraint, targeting no civilian installations. Our air force defended the nation decisively, showcasing indigenous technology and operational superiority. The unity and resolve of the Pakistani people reinforced the armed forces' spirit, ensuring victory against aggression.

How do you view the Iran-Israel war?

As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Pakistan immediately called for an

urgent UNSC meeting at the outbreak of the Iran-Israel war. We condemned Israel's attack on Iranian nuclear facilities, which are under UN safeguards, labeling it illegitimate and destabilizing. Pakistan advocates for dialogue and diplomacy as the way forward.

We've seen Pakistan announce its support for Iran. What form will this support take, and will it arm Tehran?

Pakistan supports Iran diplomatically and politically as a neighboring, brotherly state. Our Foreign Minister has categorically denied fabricated reports suggesting military support to Iran.

Why did Pakistan close its border with Iran amid the escalation with Israel?

Pakistan did not close its borders. However, monitoring mechanisms were reinforced at crossings to safeguard Pakistani Zaireen and students stranded in Iran during the crisis.

What message would you like to give on Pakistan's Independence Day this year?

This Independence Day is being observed with pride, as Pakistan has shown resilience and strength during Operation "Bunyan Al-Marsoos," responding firmly to aggression. We express gratitude to Almighty Allah for enabling us to defend our nation.

I also commend the Pakistani community in Egypt for their role in strengthening bonds between our two countries. On this occasion, we remember our brothers and sisters in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and in Palestine, who continue to endure grave human rights

abuses but remain steadfast in their struggle for freedom.

Peace in South Asia and the Middle East will remain elusive until these decades-old issues are resolved in line with UN resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri and Palestinian peoples. Pakistan remains firm in raising its voice for their right to self-determination.