



Feb 10

## In Defense of Trump's Jerusalem Move

*brendon sparkman*

On December 6th, 2017, in bold fulfillment of one of his many campaign promises, President Trump proclaimed Jerusalem as the eternal capital of Israel. This echoes similar sentiments made by a succession of his predecessors, though the principal difference between them lies with Trump's plan to fully legitimize Israel's claim by moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Previous presidents have been reticent to execute this action, born primarily from the desire to placate violence in the region brought on by the Palestinian Authority and the Palestine Liberation Organization since the PLO's founding in 1964.

The legal precedent for such an action is sound. The Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, passed with a 93-5 vote in the Senate and 374-37 vote in the House, states, "Jerusalem should be recognized as the capital of the State of Israel; and the United States Embassy in Israel should be established in Jerusalem no later than May 31, 1999." Presidents Bush, Clinton, and Obama have all waived this law, either alluding to or explicitly stating the belief that Congressional resolutions attempting to legislate foreign policy infringe upon the Executive's authority and responsibility to carry out sound and effective U.S. foreign relations. Despite this, just this past June, the Senate voted unanimously 90-0 to uphold and reaffirm Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

Apart from secular right, the claim to Jerusalem by the Israeli people is foremost a spiritual one. For millennia considered to be the wellspring of all Jewish thought and history, Jerusalem was the capital of the Kingdom of Israel, is the site of the Holy Temple, and is mentioned in the Tanakh hundreds of times. Jews



represents "the purest expression of all that Jews prayed for, dreamed of, cried for, and died for in the two thousand years since the destruction of the Second Temple." By acknowledging the reality of Israel's claim to Jerusalem, President Trump has offered renewed hope to the Israeli people and recognition of the sovereignty of one of our greatest allies.

As they are wont to do, national media outlets took center stage in decrying the move as an open invitation to conflagrations of violence in the region, as though acts of brutality against Israel are somehow a concept far removed from the history of the Israeli people. Indeed, since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 which outlined a withdrawal of Israeli forces from parts of the Gaza Strip and West Bank and established Palestinian right to self-governance within said areas through the creation of the Palestinian Authority, there has been no marked decrease of violence between the two parties. The highest death toll from a single incident stands at approximately 4,000 military and civilian personnel from September 2000 to February 2005 after Ariel Sharon, the 11th Prime Minister of Israel, visited the Temple Mount under peaceful pretense, thus resulting in the Second Intifada. Whether or not Trump's move will result in an eventual de-escalation of violence in the region remains to be seen, though clearly defined and unwavering support for Israeli autonomy is a tentative, albeit hopeful, step in the right direction.

Apart from daring changes to foreign policy, Trump's move also represents an effortless appeasement of his Republican base. His decision saw a predictable split along party lines: among Republicans, polls conducted found a 79% approval rating of recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, two thirds in support of the relocation of the embassy, and 48% approval of full support of Israeli interests, in sharp contrast to Democrats, whose opposition to both the declaration of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moving of the embassy stands at 71%, and only 12% approval of total support of Israeli interests. Amidst discussions as to whether or not the move will come to fruition in the next year as proposed--or even within the duration of his term--it is regardless undeniable that Trump's decision is a stark concession for his supporters both domestically and abroad.

*Global*

jerusalem, tel aviv, israel, palestine



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