

AMERICAN EMBASSY IN JERUSALEM – ONLY AS THE CAPITAL OF TWO STATES



Ir Amim yearns for the day in which the American flag flies over two embassies in Jerusalem – the American embassy to Israel in West Jerusalem and the American embassy to Palestine in East Jerusalem. The only framework in which this vision will be realized, however, is a comprehensive political agreement resulting in a two-state solution. Jerusalem, the capital of two peoples, will be an open, diverse, and vibrant city, administered by separate institutions of the two peoples but open to all its residents and visitors, hosting numerous embassies, and enjoying physical, economic and cultural prosperity.

Moving the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem in the current circumstances, in which there is both political stagnation and daily tension on the streets of the city, is incompatible with this vision. It is a dangerous unilateral move which violates international law and negates the essence of Jerusalem as the capital of two peoples. In what is the fiftieth anniversary of the annexation of East Jerusalem by Israel, it would be perceived as particularly provocative. In Jerusalem, more than elsewhere, Israelis and Palestinians share an urban space, and political decisions hold immediate ramifications for the daily life, wellbeing, and the security of residents of both sides.

In December 2016, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 2334, which once again declares that the Security Council “will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations.” This resolution, later adopted by the foreign ministers of 70 countries, reiterates the position that the international community and successive U.S. administrations have always held. It calls on both sides, the Israelis and Palestinians, to return to the negotiating table and do everything in their power to promote the sole viable and sustainable solution: that of two-states. The United States will continue to have a decisive role in mediating, guiding, and supporting the political process when it is restarted. The new administration has already announced the appointment of an envoy to the Middle East, as well as affirming its desire to assist the sides in resolving the conflict. The United States will find it exceptionally difficult to fulfill its pivotal role as a mediator effectively once it has moved its embassy to Jerusalem, in defiance of the position of the entire international community, and clearly favoring one side over the other.

The unwillingness of democratic countries around the world to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel does not stem from denial of the Jewish people's deep historic connection to the city. Rather, it is rooted in the principle that such recognition can be achieved only through an agreement between the two peoples which also ensures that the Palestinian bond to Jerusalem will be respected. Perhaps more than other countries, the United States should categorically oppose conditions in which 40 percent of Jerusalem's residents are ruled without their consent and without equal rights. Moving the embassy to Jerusalem, as the city is defined today by Israeli law, is a negation of the fundamental principle of the American Declaration of Independence, that "Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed".

Administration of Jerusalem, in the absence of a political agreement but looking forward to one, must reflect the essence of Jerusalem as the present home and future capital of two peoples. Both peoples have profound existential, historical and symbolic connections to the city, and both will continue to live side by side in any future political constellation. While this reality provides the backdrop for the ongoing friction in Jerusalem, it also constitutes the foundation for delicate balances that have enabled and continue to support the city's capacity to function today, as well as providing the basis for building trust and consensus towards an agreed future. Strengthening these balances and nurturing a horizon of hope for all residents of the city are essential to securing daily life and sustaining the option of a sustainable political solution. Until such an agreement is reached, unilateral steps likely to escalate tensions in the city must be avoided. Everything possible must be done to ease daily life for all residents of the city and allow the two communities to develop within the urban space. The participation of civil society and the national leaderships of both peoples, as well as the countries of the Middle East and the international community, is essential to ensuring the welfare and security of the two communities. Only steps taken in this spirit will promote the conditions essential for a viable and agreed future.



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