**Remarks at a UN Security Council Meeting on the U.S. Decision to Move the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem**

December 8, 2017

Ambassador Nikki Haley

U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations

U.S. Mission to the United Nations

New York City

https://usun.state.gov/remarks/8206

AS DELIVERED

Thank you, Mr. President. The Jewish people are a patient people. Throughout three thousand years of civilization, foreign conquest, exile, and return, Jerusalem has remained their spiritual home. For nearly 70 years, the city of Jerusalem has been the capital of the State of Israel, despite many attempts by others to deny that reality.

The American people are less patient. In 1948, the United States was the first nation to recognize the independent state of Israel. In 1995, the U.S. Congress declared that Jerusalem should be recognized as the capital of Israel, and that the U.S. Embassy should be located in Jerusalem.

Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama all agreed with that position, but they did not act. They delayed, in the hopes that a peace process would produce results – results that never came.

For 22 years, the American people have overwhelmingly supported that position, and they have waited . . . and waited. This week, President Trump finally made the decision to no longer deny the will of the American people.

It’s important to be clear about exactly what the President’s decision does. The President has announced that the United States recognizes the obvious – that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. He has also instructed the State Department to begin the process of relocating the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. That is what the President has done.

And this is what he has not done: The United States has not taken a position on boundaries or borders. The specific dimensions of sovereignty over Jerusalem are still to be decided by the Israelis and the Palestinians in negotiations. The United States has not advocated changing any of the arrangements at the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif. The President specifically called for maintaining the status quo at the holy sites.

Finally, and critically, the United States is not predetermining final status issues. We remain committed to achieving a lasting peace agreement. We support a two-state solution if agreed to by the parties.

Those are the facts of what was said and done this week. Now, there are a few more points that are central to the discussion of this issue.

Israel, like all nations, has the right to determine its capital city. Jerusalem is the home of Israel’s parliament, president, prime minister, Supreme Court, and many of its ministries.

It is simple common sense that foreign embassies be located there. In virtually every country in the world, U.S. embassies are located in the host country’s capital city. Israel should be no different.

The United States took this step in full knowledge that it will raise questions and concerns. Our actions are intended to help advance the cause of peace. We must recognize that peace is advanced, not set back, when all parties are honest with each other. Our actions reflected an honest assessment of reality.

I understand the concern members have in calling this session. Change is hard. But we should never doubt what the truth can do. We should never doubt that when we face the truth, believe in the human spirit, and encourage each other, that peace can happen.

To those who have good faith concerns about the future of peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians, let me again assure you that the President and this administration remain committed to the peace process.

To those who do not act in good faith – to any person, leader, country, or terrorist group that uses this week’s decision as a pretext for violence – you are only showing yourselves to be unfit partners of peace.

Finally, I will not let this moment pass without a comment about the United Nations itself. Over many years, the United Nations has outrageously been of the world’s foremost centers of hostility towards Israel.

The UN has done much more to damage the prospects for Middle East peace than to advance them. We will not be a party to that. The United States no longer stands by when Israel is unfairly attacked in the United Nations. And the United States will not be lectured to by countries that lack any credibility when it comes to treating both Israelis and Palestinians fairly.

It is no coincidence that the historic peace agreements between Egypt and Israel, and between Jordan and Israel, were both signed on the White House lawn. If and when there is a historic peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians, there’s a good likelihood that it, too, will be signed on the White House lawn.

Why is that? It’s because the United States has credibility with both sides. Israel will never be, and should never be, bullied into an agreement by the United Nations, or by any collection of countries that have proven their disregard for Israel’s security.

To my Palestinian brothers and sisters, I can tell you with complete confidence that the United States is deeply committed to achieving a peace agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We have demonstrated that commitment over many years and with the investment of large quantities of financial resources and diplomatic energy.

Sadly, peace between the two sides has not been achieved, but we will not give up. Our hand remains extended to you. We are more committed to the cause of Israeli-Palestinian peace today than we’ve ever been before. And we believe we might be closer to that goal than ever before.

Both Israelis and Palestinians have very real stories to tell. Painful stories of challenges, distrust, and destruction. But this conflict is not just about the past. It must not be about all of those painful stories. It must be about future generations. Palestinian and Israeli children both deserve a future of peace, one no more and no less than the other.

When those children are grown, they should look back and look to this time when the parties genuinely negotiated for their sake. These Palestinian and Israeli children deserve to have hope of a brighter and more peaceful future.

Our wish and prayer is that this is the time both sides stop thinking about present needs and start thinking about future generations‎. I urge all countries in the Security Council and in the Middle East to temper their statements and their actions in the days ahead.

Peace remains achievable. We must all do our parts to achieve it.

Thank you.