**Five Reasons Why Trump’s Jerusalem Decision Is Reckless**

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USCPR Policy Director Josh Ruebner writes in The Hill about Trump’s decision to declare Jerusalem the capital of Israel.

In the first year of a presidency defined by chaos, incoherence and rashness, President Donald Trump’s declaration Wednesday recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and beginning the process of moving the U.S. embassy there from Tel Aviv stands out as among the most reckless and dangerous decisions he has made to date.

First, Trump’s decision not only provides unprecedented diplomatic backing for Israel’s exclusivist claims over the totality of the contested city, holy to adherents of Judaism, Christianity and Islam alike and the locus of national aspirations for both Palestinians and Israelis, it also encourages fallacious Israeli thinking that its government can both continue to rule over all of historic Palestine — denying Palestinians sovereignty over any portion of their homeland — while simultaneously refusing them human and national rights. Trump’s move also emboldens the most fanatical religious elements in Israeli society, who actively campaign to demolish Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem and replace them with a Jewish temple — a prospect sure to trigger outright religious warfare.

Second, Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital reifies the separate-and-unequal regime Israel has imposed on Palestinians throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Until today, U.S. policy regarded East Jerusalem as being under Israeli military occupation, despite Israel’s de facto annexation of that portion of the city after it extended its civil jurisdiction there following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Although Palestinian Jerusalemites are not subject to martial law like their counterparts in other parts of the West Bank, they are not citizens of the country that makes decisions affecting their lives. Instead, Palestinian Jerusalemites only have tenuous residency rights in the city, which are often revoked by Israel on the flimsiest of pretexts to minimize the Palestinian presence in the city. Meanwhile, the Jerusalem municipality blatantly discriminates against its Palestinian residents, dramatically underfunding services such as housing, health, education and sanitation while privileging those services to Israelis.

Third, Trump’s decision upends more than 50 years of official U.S. opposition to Israel’s illegal actions in East Jerusalem that contravene its obligations as an occupying power under the Fourth Geneva Convention. This policy was most forcefully articulated by the Nixon administration, which in 1969 condemned Israel’s “expropriation or confiscation of land, the construction of housing on such land, the demolition or confiscation of buildings, including those having historic or religious significance,” as being “detrimental to our common interests in the city.” Despite this official policy, President Nixon and all his successors nevertheless turned a blind eye to Israel’s deepening colonization of East Jerusalem and its concomitant dispossession of Palestinians in the city. During the George W. Bush administration, Israel constructed a Berlin Wall-like monstrosity cutting off many Palestinian neighborhoods from the core of the city. Trump’s action dispenses with the pretense that the United States officially opposes these actions, giving Israel’s ghettoization of Palestinians in Jerusalem its imprimatur.

Fourth, recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital attempts to validate Israel’s ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from the western portions of the city, which fell under its jurisdiction following the 1948 Israeli-Arab war. Even before Israel’s establishment in May 1948, Zionist militias embarked on a terror campaign in Jerusalem and its environs designed to drive Palestinians from their homes. In January 1948, the Haganah blew up the Semiramis Hotel in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Qatamon, killing 26 civilians. And, in April 1948, several Zionist militias combined forces to massacre hundreds of Palestinians in the nearby village of Deir Yassin. As a result of panicked Palestinians fleeing this terror and Israel’s forced removal of other Palestinians from once-prosperous neighborhoods of the city, the western portion of the city was virtually emptied of its Palestinian inhabitants. To this day, Israel has refused to allow these Palestinian refugees from Jerusalem to return to their properties, which Israel expropriated and re-inhabited with Israeli Jews without paying compensation to their owners.

Fifth, Trump’s decision flies in the face of seven decades of U.S. policy — and the consensus of the international community — steadfastly refusing to recognize Israeli claims to sovereignty over any portion of Jerusalem. In 1947, when the United Nations General Assembly recommended the partitioning of Palestine into two states against the express wishes of the majority, indigenous Palestinian population, it also proposed that Jerusalem would be a corpus separatum, an international city administered by the U.N. This plan was never put into place as armistice agreements solidified de facto Israeli and Jordanian control over the western and eastern halves of the city respectively, a status quo which existed until Israel’s occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967. The reason why no country up until today recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital was because of this original plan to internationalize the city and a subsequent recognition that no party should impose a unilateral outcome on the city’s status.