

President Trump's statement on the status of Jerusalem

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In a perfunctory twelve minute speech, Donald Trump announced his recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and his intention to move the US embassy to the city. Whilst he talked about the need for peace, he did not recognise any equivalent right of the Palestinians to recover their land or their capital.

In doing so, he cast aside the disguise that all US Presidents have donned to hide the fact that Israel is the US' main agent within the Middle East. Its principal role is to prevent the Arab and Muslim states from uniting to restrict the plunder of the region's resources by the transatlantic military and economic colossus.

In the past, the refusal to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to locate its embassy there was the flimsiest pretence of concern for the Palestinians whose country has been remorselessly occupied by Israeli settlers and its indigenous inhabitants expelled, over the last 70 years. Naturally, the political pirates who form the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warmly welcomed Trump's decision.

They will undoubtedly take it as the green light for 'making facts on the ground'; expanding and creating new settlements on the West Bank, further isolating East Jerusalem and rendering it unviable as the capital of any future Palestinian state.

That Trump chose to break from the position adopted by twelve former US presidents, and the whole of the United Nations, feeds his pathological vanity. Previous presidents, he sneered, had lacked the 'courage' to recognise Jerusalem, despite it being voted for by Republicans and Democrats in the US Congress in 1995. 'Today, I'm delivering,' he bragged.

That this involves embarrassing and humiliating America's regional allies like the Saudi and Jordanian kings, the guardians of the holy places of Islam, indicates something more than an unbridled ego. It shows that Trump values his arch-reactionary social base at home far above the inherited geo-strategic interests and alliances of the US. This base is not just a matter of the dangerously misnamed 'Jewish Lobby'. In fact, the organised Zionist forces are heavily outnumbered by Christian fundamentalists and anti-abortion bigots, like Vice President Mike Pence, who stood immediately behind Trump as he made his statement.

The Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives, Paul Ryan, naturally hailed Trump's decision, letting slip the view that the city was destined for total Israeli absorption. 'Jerusalem has been, and always will be, the eternal, undivided capital of the State of Israel', he said.

In a display of bi-partisanship, the top Democrat in the Senate, Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, told The Weekly Standard on Tuesday that he had already advised Trump to declare Jerusalem to be Israel's

?undivided? capital.

In contrast, the ?independent? Vermont Senator, Bernie Sanders, opposed Trump?s ?plans to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Israel. There?s a reason why all past US administrations have avoided making this move (?). It would dramatically undermine the prospects for an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, and severely, perhaps irreparably, damage the United States? ability to broker that peace.?

It is good that Sanders opposes the move but, of course, it flies in the face of all experience to believe that the US could ever be a ?broker for peace?. Its only contribution to that would be to cut off the military aid amounting to \$3.15 billion per year in the period 2013-2018, out of the country?s total \$15bn defence budget. On the basis of US subsidies, Israel has built a defence industry that exported \$5.7 billions' worth of arms in 2015. Military aid is thus a valuable economic prop.

The recognition of Jerusalem as Israel?s capital also makes clear this president?s belief that engaging in multilateral diplomacy and seeking the approval of the United Nations is merely a display of American weakness and results in it getting nothing but ?bad deals?.

Diplomacy, he believes, can be replaced by bloodcurdling threats, such as his promise to ?totally destroy? North Korea, and the missile attack in Syria or his ?Mother of All Bombs? in Afghanistan. He believes that sudden and unexpected actions, which catch his opponents off-balance, including the use of the United States? enormous military power, work better than treaties or Security Council resolutions. This is perhaps one of his reasons for admiring Vladimir Putin and a whole series of despotic rulers around the world.

There are reports that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defence Secretary General James Mattis opposed Trump?s action on Jerusalem and there are rumours in Washington that Tillerson?s days are numbered. Despite Trump?s cynical claims that recognising Jerusalem will lead to peace, it could also scupper the peace initiative of his son-in-law, Jared Kushner. For Trump, going ahead regardless of such considerations also plays the role of showing who really calls the shots in Washington.

Trump's action strips naked the humbug of ?international law?, as overseen by the United Nations. Since 1967, when Israel occupied the rest of Palestine that it had not conquered in 1948, the UN, and all its member states, have made much of their refusal to recognise the move of Israel's government to Jerusalem. While Israel steadily expropriated the Palestinians of the West Bank, the ?international community? allowed itself to be fooled into endless rounds of pointless ?peace negotiations? as justification for not recognising any Palestinian state.

Instead, they emphasised ?Israel's right to exist?, a fake phrase whose real meaning is acceptance of the Zionist state's seizure and settlement of another people's country. No genuine principle of democracy obliges any people to recognise the ?rights? of their oppressors when these intrinsically violate their own right to self-determination. Despite this, the weak-kneed Palestinian leadership accepted the ?right of the state of Israel to exist?, and abandoned any active struggle, thereby legitimising, de facto, the expropriation and expulsion of millions of Palestinians.

The ?two-state solution? on the territory currently occupied by Israel is a mirage, and always was. Trump still claims to support it but, like all his predecessors, he gives Israel a veto by adding, ?if agreed by both sides?. For those with ears to hear, Netanyahu and defence minister Avigdor Lieberman have on several occasions rejected it. Netanyahu made it clear in his election campaign that it would never happen ?on my watch?. Lieberman sees it as possible, but only if Israel?s Palestinian citizens were to be moved out. In other words, the only possible Palestinian state would be on the territory of what is currently the Kingdom

of Jordan.

Even when pressured by Obama and the Europeans to pay lip service to the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, they insist it would only be acceptable if it were totally disarmed and its external borders were controlled by Israel. In other words, it would not be a sovereign state in any recognised sense of the term. In practice, all Israeli coalition governments, whether led by Labour or Likud, have maintained a continuous encroachment upon pre-1967 Palestinian land, splitting up what remained into noncontiguous territories that could never become more than South African-style Bantustans. More and more supporters of the Palestinians are coming to realise that a two-state solution is not on offer and never will be.

Palestinian organisations have called for three 'Days of Rage' in protest at Trump's declaration and there is talk of a new Intifada. If so, it demands massive international support. But, marvellously heroic as the young Palestinians facing Israeli bullets and bombs with stones and slingshots undoubtedly are, David only defeats Goliath in mythology. Whilst the mobilisation of the rightful majority of the country is critical, a strategy for Palestinian liberation must reach out to the working classes, the youth and the popular masses of the entire surrounding region.

Their struggle also needs the support of the labour and other progressive movements in the main imperialist countries that prop up the artificial Zionist entity and without which it would hardly survive for long. Finally, such a strategy must seek the support of the brave sections of Israeli society and Jewish socialists around the world, who reject the wars and repression inflicted on the Palestinians. In this context, any tainting of anti-Zionism with the poison of antisemitism is not only wrong in principle but would represent a severe blow to the liberation struggle itself. Antisemitism is the anti-imperialism of fools.

The generation of the Arab Spring has been suppressed, but not obliterated. For them, the freedom of Palestine is not only an important rallying point but a struggle that exposes the hypocrisy of their despotic rulers' claims of solidarity with the Palestinians. Progressive forces world wide, including in the 'belly of the beast', Trump's America, need to recognise that the overthrow of the Zionist oppressors, not the chimera of peaceful co-existence with them, would be an immense victory for freedom worldwide.

The increasing rivalry between the imperialist powers, expressed more and more openly by Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping as they manoeuvre to redivide the world's resources, markets and exploitable workforces, threatens a third, unbelievably devastating, world war. Whatever vicious new surprise Trump, Netanyahu, and even the Saudi Crown Prince or the Egyptian dictator, have been preparing in their recent talks could be trigger for that.

The only force powerful enough to stop this is the international workers' movement in each and every country. We must inscribe on its banners not only the emancipation of the working class from capitalist exploitation and the defeat of imperialist wars but also the liberation of Palestine. Support for this is an acid test of all forces that are serious about a socialist revolution in the 21st century.

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