**Trump’s Jerusalem Declaration - Background, Talking Points, and Key Actions**

**The Issue and Ramifications:**

On Wednesday, December 6, President Trump announced his decision to relocate the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem which he declared as the capital of Israel in gross violation of international law. This move contravenes decades of bipartisan U.S. foreign policy that considers Jerusalem a final-status negotiation issue.

Officially changing Jerusalem’s status is reckless and dangerous. It would shift the decades-old U.S. position that Jerusalem is disputed ground and its status should be resolved through negotiations. However, international law and international resolutions stipulate that Jerusalem is occupied territory, and the native inhabitants of the city are being ethnically cleansed.

As occupied territory since 1967, the UN Security Council adopted in 1980 two binding resolutions on Jerusalem ([476](http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/6DE6DA8A650B4C3B852560DF00663826) and [478](http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/DDE590C6FF232007852560DF0065FDDB)) by a vote of 14-0 (the US abstained and did not veto either resolution.) Both resolutions condemned Israel’s attempt to change “the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure, (and) the status of the Holy City of Jerusalem.” It also reaffirmed “the overriding necessity to end the prolonged occupation of Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem,” and called out Israel as “the occupying power.” It further considered any changes to the city of Jerusalem as “a violation of international law.”   
  
International law clearly states that the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip are occupied territories. United Nations Security Council [Resolution 2334](https://www.ampalestine.org/newsroom/amp-rejects-israel%E2%80%99s-interference-al-aqsa-sanctuary) categorically recognizes East Jerusalem as being occupied, and then-Secretary of State John Kerry, in his [2016 remarks to the Security Council](http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/international/312008-full-speech-john-kerry-defends-un-vote-decision-in) stated: ”… remember that every U.S. administration since 1967, along with the entire international community, has recognized East Jerusalem as among the territories that Israel occupied in the Six-Day War.”

This year UNESCO in an overwhelming vote reaffirmed “the importance of the Old City of Jerusalem and its walls for the three monotheistic religions,” while accusing Israel of actions that have “altered, or purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City.” The declaration has also stated that the city is “occupied” and that Israel’s rule over it is “null and void”.

The waiver of the Jerusalem Embassy Act, which mandates that the U.S. must move its embassy, has been consistently signed every six months by every president since it was originally passed in Congress in 1995. The act included a provision that allows the president to suspend the relocation of the embassy based on national security concerns.

Declaring Jerusalem as Israel’s capital not only transgresses the rights of Palestinians who are being ethnically cleansed in their own homeland, but also threatens U.S. national security and interests. It severely jeopardizes its standing around the world, especially within the Muslim World, and ends any possibility of being an “honest broker” in the Middle East. In fact, it’s widely reported that president Trump’s own foreign policy advisers cautioned him against this reckless decision and it will not bring about the “ultimate deal,” which Trump often brags about; rather, it sends a message to Palestinians that their self-determination is no longer a priority in peace negotiations.

Living under brutal occupation for over half a century without any prospect for its end, the Palestinian people, particularly in Jerusalem, have been living [Israeli incursions on their holy sites](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HG2vZTcassE) and have repeatedly revolted against the ceaseless occupation. As a consequence, the Israeli army, aided by thousands of [armed settlers](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5AkFlAeCHE) roaming the West Bank, have consistently intensified their use of violence, which [resulted](http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2015/10/mapping-dead-latest-israeli-palestinian-violence-151013142015577.html) in over [100 deaths](http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2015/10/mapping-dead-latest-israeli-palestinian-violence-151013142015577.html), 2200 injuries, and 4000 arrests in the past year. The Israeli army and gangs of armed settlers, though forbidden under international law and the Geneva conventions, have regularly employed various violent means in order to force Palestinian exile or compel submission to the occupation. The Israeli harsh tactics include: [settler violence](http://www.btselem.org/topic/settler_violence) and [provocation](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0kCX53YIcw) under [full army protection](http://www.imemc.org/article/73371), [targeting children](http://palestineun.org/1-may-2015-israeli-occupying-force-violations-against-palestinian-children/), including [kidnapping](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWZy1eFT-Ow), [killing](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOR0lXHKhBo), as well as arresting children as [young as five](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xs1fIjIKamo) , [burning](http://www.dci-palestine.org/palestinian_toddler_burns_to_death_in_suspected_settler_arson_attack) infants alive, the constant use of [collective punishment](http://www.i24news.tv/en/news/israel/diplomacy-defense/87868-151004-israel-police-restrict-access-to-jerusalem-s-old-city-amid-rise-in-violence) and [house demolitions](http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-razes-west-bank-home-jailed-palestinian-arrest-hamas-leader-1302253076), the use of excessive [prison sentences](http://sputniknews.com/middleeast/20150722/1024901235.html) for any act of defiance including throwing rocks, [storming](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Lm4j0Do2hA) revered [religious sites](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HG2vZTcassE), and the deliberate [targeting of journalists](http://www.alaraby.co.uk/medianews/2015/10/9/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B1%D8%B7%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%B1%D8%A9) who dare to challenge Israeli hegemony. Instead of punishing the perpetrators of violence and illegal occupation, Trump is awarding the occupiers and punishing the victims of violence and ethnic cleansing. To paraphrase former President Jimmy Carter, “Israel is an Apartheid state and that Apartheid needs to end.”

**A Message of Hope:**

Although the decision by president Trump sent shockwaves through the global Muslim community, we should not be pessimistic. With challenges come opportunities, as we witnessed when Trump signed his first “Muslim Ban” back in February. At the time, thousands of Americans from different faiths and backgrounds came out to rally against this bigoted policy. Jewish rabbis and activists, Christian pastors and priests, Imams, leaders of Muslim organizations and non-Muslim organizations alike, were unified in their rejection of this dangerous decision. This is an opportunity for us, if we can seize it, to better coordinate and elevate our work and to make it more impactful.

**Action Items: Educate...Mobilize...Organize...**

* Participate at a major rally on Saturday, December 16, 2017 in front of the White House in Washington D.C. Details forthcoming; stay tuned!
* Call three numbers on Tuesday, December 12, between the hours of 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM EST to voice your objection to this decision:
  + 1) The White House 202-456-1111
  + 2) Your Representatives https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative
  + 3) Your Two Senators (202) 224-3121
* Call the Turkish Embassy in Washington, D.C. (202) 612-6700, and let them know that as American Muslims and supporters of Palestinian rights, you will support any action taken by the Turkish president who serves as president of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to reverse this decision
* Call the Office of the Arab League in New York (212) 838-8700 urging it to take action and exercise all diplomatic means to reverse this decision
* Call the Office of the Palestine Mission to the UN In New York (212) 288-8500, to demand that they don’t waiver on Palestinian rights or bow down to external pressure. Also, demand that they immediately and sincerely achieve Palestinian unity in the face of this onslaught
* Sign AMP’s letter to the White House stating your objection to this reckless decision
* Invite a speaker to your masjid or community to speak about this issue. AMP is committed to helping you
* Organize a local rally in your community
* Become a volunteer with AMP ([www.ampalestine.org](http://www.ampalestine.org))
* **Organize three events:** 1) An event at the masjid or community center for adults 2) An event for the youth about Palestine and Jerusalem 3) Event(s) at the nearest campus, church, or public library
* Send at least 20 letters from your community to the editor of your local newspaper
* Talk to the heads of the local parties, Republican and Democrat, and to the local politicians in your county, city, state.
* Call your radio call-in shows to express your rejection of this misguided policy
* Talk to your fellow American friends and coworkers
* Visit American Muslims for Palestine (AMP) website, and subscribe to their email list to be always aware of the situation and what you can do

**American Muslims are tied to Palestine spiritually and socio-politically**

Spiritually, the Quran and Sunnah are filled with references indicating Jerusalem and Palestine's centrality to the deen: *“Glorified (and Exalted) be He [above all (evil) they associated with Him] who took His slave (Muhammad pbuh) for a journey by night from Al Masjid al Haram to Al Masjid al Aqsa, the neighborhood whereof We have blessed, in order that We might show him of Our Ayat. Verily, He is the Al-Hearer, the All-Seer.” (17:1)*

The seventeenth chapter of our Holy Qur’an mentions this event with one verse yet the implications of Al Isra w’al Miraj which transcend time and place are significant for our umma. Of course, it was during al Miraj that Allah (swt) prescribed the five daily prayers, which is tantamount for our faith. It was this event that also made Al Aqsa mosque our third holiest site after Makkah and Madinah. The Prophet Muhammad (s) said that a prayer offered in Al Aqsa is worth 500 prayers.

This year we marked the centennial of the disastrous Balfour Declaration on November 2nd and the 50th anniversary of the June 1967 war, known as the Six Day War in which Israel occupied the rest of the 22 percent of historic Palestine and Jerusalem. At the end of that horrible war, in which 350,000 Palestinians were forcefully expelled from their homes – many for the second time since the Nakba -- Israel’s occupation of Palestine was complete. This occupation is illegal, inhumane and unjust. It results in the imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians, the loss of the freedom of movement, home demolitions and a complete siege on Gaza.

Socio-politically, the American Muslim community is tied to Palestine because every major funder, organization, and activist in the Islamophobia network is connected to the hardline pro-Israel Lobby. Christian Zionists make up a significant percentage of them. As anti-Muslim bigot Daniel Pipes once said, the political empowerment of American Muslims is a direct threat to Israel. This is why they try to marginalize our community and many of our leaders from the democratic process by making us appear "radioactive." Some shortsighted Muslims who are more worried about having a seat at the table ignorantly play into this.

Unfortunately, some mainstream American Jewish Zionist organizations have also been involved in subtle and passive promotion of Islamophobia while openly claiming to be against bias and in favor of interfaith dialogue. Politically speaking, no other country in the world gets the special treatment that Israel does from the United States. Militarily, economically, and politically, the United States and Israel have the most special relationship. So, whether you like it or not, you cannot avoid the occupation of Palestine in your political calculations, dear American Muslims. It is not an issue “over there,” but is very much a local issue.