

THE RELOCATION OF THE US EMBASSY TO JERUSALEM

Background

When the UN presented its petition plan in 1947, with a Jewish state next to an Arab state, Jerusalem remained separate and was meant to be an “international city”. The UN’s plan was rejected by the region’s Arab leader and was accepted by the Jewish leaders.

A year after in 1948, during the war that followed Israel’s declaration of independence, the “international city” was left divided with its western part under Israel’s control and its eastern half, including the Old City, under Jordan’s control. Twenty years later, during the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel occupied East Jerusalem, including the Old City, and formally annexed it in 1980. The annexed land totalled 70 squared kilometers of West Bank land, including 28 Palestinian villages previously in the outskirts of the city.

The international community condemned Israel’s annexation of East Jerusalem and called for an Israeli capital in West Jerusalem and a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem, with a separate plan for the Old City in order that both Israeli and Palestinians can have access to their holy sites. The recognition of these capitals was meant to be the final step of any future peace negotiations – not a starting point.

[Watch Vox’s explainer: Why Jerusalem can make or break peace between Israelis and Palestinians](#)

Where countries keep their embassies and consulates?

Because the rest of the world does not recognise the annexation of Jerusalem, and therefore the status of the city is contested, most countries keep their formal diplomatic missions in Tel Aviv. Some countries keep their consulates in Jerusalem. Countries like the UK and France keep theirs in the eastern part of the city, primarily to service the occupied Palestinian territories, and the US keeps its consulate in West Jerusalem. Though the US always kept its embassy in Tel Aviv, Israel has been leasing a space in Jerusalem to the US since 1989. The lease for this plot of land, which until this day never have been developed, costs the US just a mere \$1 per year.

[Find out more about Jerusalem](#)

So why had the US not moved its embassy to Jerusalem by now?

In 1995 Congress passed a law requiring the US to move its embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv back. The rationale was that the US should respect Israel’s decision to make Jerusalem its capital by moving its embassy to the city. Yet, every American president since 1995, including Clinton, Bush and Obama, has chosen not to do so due to ‘national security issues’.

Why shouldn't the US recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital and move its embassy?

If America moves its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem it means it effectively recognises the capital of Israel as Jerusalem. This move will break the international community's consensus that the final status of Jerusalem, and how it will be shared between Israel and the Palestinians must be part of a peace agreement, and, many argue, will signal that the end of peace hopes between Israel and Palestine.

Palestinian leaders say that moving the US embassy to Jerusalem is a violation of international law and a serious obstacle to peace negotiations. Some fear that the move will spark a wave of violent protest the region.

Yachad's position

As Jews, Jerusalem is central to our people and our history. At the same time, Jerusalem is also crucially important to other religions, and other peoples. Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. Jerusalem is also a divided city. Attempts to alter its geopolitical status should take place within the context of negotiated agreements, not unilateral declarations. Large portions of the municipality lie beyond the Green Line and therefore outside of Israel's sovereign territory.

The 37% of Jerusalemites who are Palestinians, who live in a Jerusalem that most Israeli and American politicians will never see, deserve the same level of recognition, and the same independence, as Jews and Israelis. There will be no 'ultimate deal' between Israelis and Palestinians without both Israeli and Palestinian capitals in Jerusalem.

[Click here to read Yachad's policy on Jerusalem](#)

[Watch CBS News report about the expected move of the embassy to Jerusalem in May 2018.](#)