

US Senators Introduce Bill to Move Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem

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Three US senators introduced a bill to congress on Wednesday that would recognize Jerusalem as Israel's undivided capital and move the US embassy there from Tel Aviv, defying international stances on the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict resting on a two-state solution.

[According to The Guardian](#), Republican senators Ted Cruz (Texas), Dean Heller (Nevada), and Marco Rubio (Florida), introduced the Jerusalem Embassy and Recognition Act at the 115th Congress in Washington on Wednesday, as Republicans control both the Senate and House of Representatives for the first time since 2007.

If implemented, the bill would give legitimacy to Israel's illegal occupation of East Jerusalem since 1967, disregard Palestinian claims to the city, and possibly terminate a longstanding White House policy to perpetually defer a 1995 Congressional decision to recognize Jerusalem as the Israeli capital and move the embassy there.

The bill has been introduced as President-Elect Donald Trump will be sworn in as the American President on Jan. 20. The soon-to-be president of the United States pledged during his campaign that, if elected, he would ensure that the US embassy in Israel was moved to Jerusalem, with Trump's senior adviser Kellyanne Conway [reiterating last month](#) that the move would be a "very big priority" for the Trump administration.

Trump has also been a [vocal supporter](#) for the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory, which have been condemned by the international community as representing a clear violation of international law.

Earlier this month, outgoing US President Barack Obama renewed a presidential waiver that again delayed plans to relocate the embassy for another six months, citing "national security interests," as every US president has done since Bill Clinton.

While many countries have consulates in Jerusalem that cater to citizens residing in the occupied Palestinian territory, the majority of embassies to Israel are located in the Tel Aviv area.

Meanwhile, Trump's choice for US Ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, has been described as a "pro-settler lawyer" who has openly announced his disdain for the two-state solution and his support for recognizing an undivided Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

He has positioned himself as a divisive and controversial figure in Israeli-Palestinian politics,

accusing President Barack Obama of being an “anti-Semite” and comparing American Jews who oppose the half-century occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, to Nazi prisoners who served as guards in concentration camps.

Friedman also serves as president of the American Friends in Beit El Yeshiva — a group that supports the illegal settlement of Beit El near Ramallah in the occupied West Bank — and said he hoped to “strengthen the unbreakable bond between our two countries and advance the cause of peace within the region, and look forward to doing this from the US embassy in Israel’s eternal capital, Jerusalem,” just hours after being appointed to the post.

[Last month](#), Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Secretary-General Saeb Erekat warned that the PLO would revoke all previously signed agreements with Israel as well as the PLO’s 1993 recognition of Israel if Trump followed through on his pledge to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

During a conference call in Washington D.C. organized by the Wilson Center, Erekat reportedly said such a move would indicate the US’s acceptance of “Israel’s illegal annexation of East Jerusalem,” and further warned that “any hope of peace in the future will just vanish,” Times of Israel [reported](#).

[In November](#), in response to Trump’s initial comments on the issue, Palestinian ambassador to the United Nations Riyad Mansour threatened to “make life miserable” for the United States at the United Nations if the embassy was moved, pointing out that such a decision would represent a violation of UN General Assembly Resolution 181 regarding the status of Jerusalem, and constitute “belligerency” towards Palestinians.

Both Bill Clinton and George W. Bush made similar promises to move the embassy during their presidential campaigns, but once in office they signed the waiver required to avoid following through with the move.

The American bill’s introduction also comes on the heels of a UN General Assembly resolution, which [passed last month](#), reiterating the international community’s rejection of Israeli settlement expansion in the occupied Palestinian territory and restating its illegality under international law.

After strongly condemning the resolution’s passage, the Israeli government has openly expressed its anticipation for a Trump presidency when right-wing politicians believe they will more easily advance plans to expand Israeli settlements and consolidate Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem and other parts of the West Bank.

The fate of Jerusalem has been a focal point of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for decades, with numerous tensions arising over Israeli threats regarding the status of non-Jewish religious sites in the city, and the “Judaization” of East Jerusalem through settlement construction and mass demolitions of Palestinian homes.

While members of the international community have rested the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the discontinuation of illegal Israeli settlements and the establishment of a two-state solution, Israeli leaders have instead shifted further to the right as many Knesset members have called for an escalation of settlement building in the occupied West Bank, and with some having advocated for its complete annexation.

A number of Palestinian activists have criticized the two-state solution as unsustainable and

unlikely to bring durable peace, proposing instead a binational state with equal rights for Israelis and Palestinians.

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