

Trump and Jerusalem: The end of the Mideast “peace” charade

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US President Donald Trump’s arrogant and provocative speech declaring US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, and Washington’s intention to move its embassy there, bore its first fruits Thursday in the form of over 100 Palestinian workers and youth wounded by Israeli troops using live ammunition, rubber bullets and tear gas to quell protests throughout the occupied territories.

In his speech Wednesday, Trump overturned seven decades of a US policy founded on hypocrisy. While the State Department has formally held that the status of Jerusalem can only be determined based on a negotiated settlement between the Israelis and Palestinians, successive US presidential candidates, Democrats and Republicans alike, have vowed to move the embassy, only to back off from the promise once in office. Similarly, the US Congress voted in near unanimity for the move, while providing the president with a national security waiver to postpone the relocation.

The explosive character of disputes concerning jurisdiction over Jerusalem, which is home to what are considered among the most holy sites of Islam, Christianity and Judaism, has been recognized by international diplomacy since well before the founding of the state of Israel.

In one stroke, Trump upended the posturing of past administrations. In doing so, he sent a clear signal to the right-wing government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that its expansion of Zionist settlements, expropriation of Palestinian land, ethnic cleansing and wholesale repression will enjoy unconditional support from Washington.

To the Palestinian Authority, he offered nothing outside of a demand that it continue its role as a security guard for Israel and the West, calling upon it to join in an American crusade “to defeat radicalism” and ensure that the Palestinian people “respond to disagreement with reasoned debate, not violence.”

A people subjected to unrelenting Israeli violence, the confiscation of its land, arbitrary imprisonment of its youth and the killing of tens of thousands of its people in

successive wars and acts of repression is told to engage in “reasoned debate,” when the issues have already been settled in complete contempt for their fundamental aspirations and rights.

Trump cast the recognition of Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem—40 percent of whose residents, some 320,000 Palestinians, are denied the rights of citizens—and the moving of the American embassy as a “long overdue step to advance the peace process.” This is a “process” that is overseen by his son-in-law Jared Kushner and the former top lawyers for his corporation, Jason Greenblatt and David Friedman, the US ambassador to Israel, all of them ardent supporters of the illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied territories.

Trump crassly portrayed his speech as an act of “delivering” on his campaign promises, made in 2016 to win the support of both right-wing Christian Evangelicals and a small group of wealthy right-wing American Zionists who provided him with campaign financing. Under conditions in which his administration is beset by crises, he is anxious to solidify this “base.”

More fundamentally, however, his act of political aggression against the Palestinians is bound up with the drive toward war throughout the Middle East, particularly against Iran. On the same day that Trump delivered his speech, the Pentagon acknowledged that it has 2,000 US troops deployed in Syria—four times the number previously admitted—and no intention of withdrawing them after the routing of ISIS.

In the wake of Trump’s speech, there have been numerous warnings that the shift in US policy will provoke new terrorist attacks, with Islamist groups such as Al Qaeda appealing to religious sentiments. No doubt this has been factored into the calculations of the US military and intelligence apparatus, which will seize upon any new act of terrorism as the pretext for war abroad—particularly against Iran—and intensified attacks on democratic rights at home.

Trump’s speech has met with near universal condemnation, including from virtually every Arab regime

as well as all of Washington's nominal allies in Western Europe.

The European bourgeoisie sees Washington's provocative unilateral move as cutting across its interests, risking the incitement of Muslim populations within their borders while furthering an anti-Iranian policy that would deny them access to lucrative investments and markets. At the same time, it is clear from the response of the German and French governments, in particular, that the European ruling classes will use Trump's move as a justification for pursuing their own independent great power interests in the Middle East and elsewhere, including by military means.

As for the Arab regimes, the protests ring ever more hollow. The Saudi monarchy, the Egyptian police state dictatorship of General Sisi, the Jordanian Hashemite monarchy and the Palestinian Authority (PA) of Mahmoud Abbas were all informed in advance of the change in US policy on Jerusalem.

There are credible reports that the Saudi strongman, Crown Prince Mohammed bin-Salman, summoned Abbas to Riyadh last month to dictate to him the terms of a US-Israeli "peace" that would leave all of Jerusalem and virtually all of the West Bank settlements in Israeli hands, deny Palestinian refugees the right of return and reduce a Palestinian "state" to a patchwork of discontinuous Bantustans whose borders would remain under Israeli control. Abbas was reportedly given the ultimatum to either accept this monstrosity or be "fired," i.e., cut off from the Saudi money upon which his Palestinian Authority depends.

The Arab regimes, which have betrayed the Palestinians countless times over the past 70 years, have no interest in opposing Trump and Netanyahu. Saudi Arabia and the other reactionary Sunni Gulf monarchies want to unite with them against Iran.

The Islamist Palestinian group Hamas, which has been in negotiations with the PA over sharing governance of the besieged Gaza Strip, is no different. While warning that Trump's decision would "open the doors of hell," it represents just another faction of the Palestinian bourgeoisie, camouflaging itself in religious fundamentalism while seeking a deal with the imperialists and Israel.

While Netanyahu hailed Trump's decision as a "historic landmark," in reality it is merely a tombstone erected on the grave of the political fictions known as the "peace process" and the "two-state solution" that have been used to mask and justify the oppression of the Palestinian people for decades.

Trump's action has laid bare—once again—the fraud of the claims that the aspirations of the Palestinian people and an end to their oppression by the Zionist state can be obtained through deals and maneuvers between imperialism and the

Arab bourgeois regimes.

The growing Middle East crisis, marked by multiple ongoing wars and increasing Israeli-Palestinian tensions, has exposed the historic bankruptcy of bourgeois nationalism.

In its Zionist variant, it claimed legitimacy on the grounds of establishing a homeland for Jews fleeing the horrors of the Holocaust. Instead, it has created a militarized state based upon colonialism and expansionism, pitting the Jewish population against the Palestinians and the other peoples of the region, while presiding over one of the most unequal societies on the face of the planet. As Leon Trotsky warned, the creation of this state has proven to be a "bloody trap" for the Jewish people.

Palestinian nationalism has itself proven utterly incapable of achieving the democratic and social aspirations of the Palestinian people based on the bourgeois nationalist program of creating a new mini-state in the Middle East. Instead, it has created only the Palestinian Authority, which represents the interests of no one outside of Abbas and his fellow officials and millionaires who feed off of foreign aid contracts and CIA stipends, while repressing resistance to occupation.

Putting an end to the decades of oppression, poverty and violence suffered by the Palestinians, and stopping the danger of a region-wide war, is the task of the working class, which must unite its forces across all national and religious boundaries in a common struggle against imperialism and its local agents, both Israeli and Arab.

The breakdown of the political fictions that have dominated the region, fueled by the insoluble crisis of capitalism, poses the urgent necessity of uniting the Jewish and Arab working class in the struggle for a Socialist Federation of the Middle East as part of the struggle to put an end to capitalism across the planet.



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