

Two Palestinians killed, hundreds wounded in clashes following Trump announcement on Jerusalem

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Over 200 Palestinians were injured and at least two killed in clashes with Israeli soldiers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on Friday. The protests came in the wake of US President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and pledge to move the US embassy there from Tel Aviv, in a move that upended decades of US policy toward the region.

Israeli soldiers opened fire on hundreds of protesters advancing on Army posts from the Gaza Strip, killing a 30-year-old and injuring dozens more. In Jerusalem itself, police scuffled with demonstrators trying to enter the Old City. Palestinian medics reported at least 217 injuries in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This followed the wounding of 31 Palestinians in violent clashes Thursday. *Al-Jazeera* reported that there have been close to 800 injuries since protests began.

The wave of protests spread internationally, from Indonesia in Southeast Asia to Tunisia in North Africa. In Amman, the capital of Jordan, tens of thousands marched. Large crowds in Tehran, the Iranian capital, chanted "death to Israel" and "death to America" and burned pictures of Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani called Trump's decision "wrong, illegitimate, provocative and very dangerous."

Citing alleged rocket fire, the Israeli Air Force carried out strikes in the Gaza Strip late Friday, injuring 25 Palestinians, including six children. *Haaretz* reported that a rocket had exploded in the Israeli town of Sderot, causing no casualties.

The Trump administration's recognition of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital was a deliberate provocation. It is a breach of international law, which has long maintained that the status of the city can be resolved only in peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, and has never recognized Israel's illegal annexation of East Jerusalem. The move represents the definitive end of the charade of the "peace process" and "two-state solution" promoted for decades by the US and its imperialist allies.

The recognition of Jerusalem, coming less than two months after Trump refused to certify Iran's compliance with the 2015 agreement on its nuclear activity, is part of US imperialism's broader incitement of conflicts throughout the Middle East and preparation for a regional war with Tehran. The announcement came the same day the Pentagon admitted that 2,000 US troops are in Syria, four times the number previously acknowledged, and that the US forces will remain indefinitely. This underscores the hypocrisy of the claims that the Syrian conflict has been aimed at ISIS terrorists, whose forces have been militarily routed in the country. In truth, Washington is determined to push back Iranian and Russian influence so as to consolidate unchallenged US dominance over the energy-rich Middle East.

Washington's strategy involves the forging of a coalition made up of Israel and the Sunni Gulf monarchies, above all Saudi Arabia.

Trump's move grants the far-right Israeli regime of Benjamin Netanyahu carte blanche not only to crack down on protests and continue its expansionist settlement policy in the West Bank, but also to escalate its confrontation with its regional foes, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Iranian regime. In September, the Israeli armed forces carried out their largest exercises in 20 years, simulating the defense of Israel against a Hezbollah invasion. Tel Aviv has also regularly struck weapons shipments and targets in Syria with the aim of thwarting Iranian expansion, and has vowed to launch military action if pro-Iranian forces establish themselves close to the Israeli border.

Israel has also encouraged Saudi Arabia's hardline anti-Iran stance, including by endorsing Riyadh's destabilization campaign in Lebanon. The Saudi monarchy is concerned not with the fate of the Palestinians, but with confronting Tehran with Israeli support and the blessings of the Trump administration.

Trump's policy shift has already brought tensions in the

region to the boiling point. Both Hezbollah and Gaza-based Hamas have called for Palestinians to launch a third intifada.

Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas denounced the decision as “deplorable,” and Jibril Rajoub, a senior PA official, stated that US Vice President Mike Pence would not be welcome in Palestinian territory during a planned visit to Israel and Palestine later this month. Rajoub added that a scheduled meeting with Pence would be cancelled.

Riyad Mansour, Palestine’s ambassador to the United Nations, declared that Trump’s announcement should disqualify the US from playing any leadership role in peace talks to resolve the conflict.

In fact, both the PA and Hamas leadership are increasingly discredited in the eyes of the Palestinian and Arab masses. Abbas and the PA function as a security force for Israel and the US against the Palestinian population, representing a wealthy elite that lives largely off of stipends from the CIA. Their entire perspective of maneuvering between the various great powers to push for the creation of a Palestinian statelet within the imperialist- and Zionist-dominated framework of the Middle East has been exposed as bankrupt.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is to host an emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Countries December 13 to discuss Jerusalem, warned that Trump’s speech had plunged the entire region into a “ring of fire.” But all of the bourgeois regimes in the region, including Turkey, are complicit in the decades of oppression of the Palestinians.

Trump’s brusque dispensing with the fraud of the so-called “peace process” and the “two-state solution” has underscored the fundamentally reactionary character of bourgeois nationalism and posed the need for a socialist and internationalist alternative, uniting the Arab and Jewish working class in a common struggle for a socialist Middle East.

Trump’s policy shift has also intensified the rift between Washington and its nominal European allies. Britain, France and Germany all condemned Trump’s announcement. Canada is the only close ally of the US to avoid direct criticism of the White House announcement.

Britain and France led six other members of the UN Security Council in calling for an emergency session Friday. Unsurprisingly, the US was not one of the eight states requesting the meeting.

At the Security Council, US Ambassador Nikki Haley arrogantly dismissed any criticism of the Trump administration’s position, directing her fire instead at the UN for its alleged anti-Israel bias. She claimed that Washington would still accept a two-state solution if both sides agreed to it.

The European imperialist powers are no more concerned with the oppression of the Palestinian people than is Trump. They view the current crisis as an opportunity to strengthen their position in the Middle East at Washington’s expense.

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini summed up the thinking in Berlin and Paris when she declared Thursday that the US approach “has the potential to send us backwards to even darker times,” and that “what happens in Jerusalem concerns the entire region and the entire world.” She said Washington’s role in the peace process would be diminished as a result of Trump’s announcement--meaning that the EU had to renew its focus and play a more active role in the region.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian stated that Washington had excluded itself from being a mediator in the Middle East.

Germany’s *Süddeutsche Zeitung* noted in an article that unlike Trump’s provocations over North Korea, in the Middle East the EU is “directly called upon.” It continued: “Due to the geographical proximity, and the historical, political and economic ties, [the EU] sees itself as bearing a responsibility to which it certainly was not able to do justice in the past.”

These comments follow on the heels of German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel’s keynote foreign policy address, which urged Germany to stand up more forcefully against the United States and define its own foreign policy ambitions.

The European reaction underscores that the deepening crisis over Jerusalem poses the threat not only of a regional conflict, but could serve as the trigger for an intensification of great power rivalries across the Middle East, with both American and European imperialism striving to assert their preeminence.



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