Trump unveils farcical Mideast “peace plan” as Netanyahu is indicted

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Donald Trump joined with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House Tuesday to publicly unveil what the US president described as his “vision for peace” in the Middle East. It was a farcical proposal, endorsing all of the policies of the Israeli right while guaranteeing rejection by the Palestinian people.

The timing of the release of the “vision,” which is supposedly the brainchild of Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner and the product of over two years of work, was patently set to meet the immediate political needs of both Trump and Netanyahu. It came as Trump’s impeachment trial in the US Senate continued into its second week and only hours after Netanyahu was formally indicted on charges of fraud and bribery. The indictment came after Netanyahu dropped a futile attempt to win a vote in the Israeli Knesset granting him immunity from prosecution.

Trump’s announcement clearly was aimed at boosting the badly tattered image of Netanyahu, who faces his third election contest in less than a year. During the last round of voting, Trump similarly tried to promote the Israeli prime minister’s chances by announcing US recognition of Israel’s illegal claim to the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

The Trump administration has also recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, moving its embassy there, and has cut off hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to the Palestinians. Late last year, it announced that it no longer regarded Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian territory as “inconsistent with international law.”

In what amounted to self-parody, Trump proclaimed a “historic breakthrough” for the plan on the grounds that he had succeeded in winning approval from both Netanyahu and his rival in the Israeli elections set for March 2, Benny Gantz, the Blue and White Party candidate, who is a former chief of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

Gantz, in an attempt to offset the obvious effort to boost Netanyahu’s status as a world statesman, flew to Washington on Monday and met with Trump privately before flying back to Israel for the anticipated vote on Netanyahu’s bid for immunity.

That this “breakthrough” included absolutely no discussion, much less agreement, with any Palestinian representative was taken as a matter of course. The US president allowed that the Palestinians would have four years to accommodate themselves to the US-Israeli diktat, while his son-in-law threatened that this would be their “last chance” to obtain an independent Palestinian state.

The audience assembled to hear the proclamation of Trump’s “vision” consisted of his own cabinet members, right-wing supporters, Israeli officials, and prominent American Zionists, including the casino billionaire Sheldon Adelson, a major funder of both the Republican Party and Israeli settlements, who occupied one of the prime front-row seats. They interrupted Trump’s and Netanyahu’s remarks with applause over 70 times—most of them standing ovations—including whoops of joy when the US president bragged of assassinating Iranian Gen. Qassem Suleimani and ripping up the Iran nuclear agreement.

The plan announced by Trump essentially formalizes the “facts on the ground” established by relentless Israeli aggression and land grabs in the occupied territories. It provides a US seal of approval for formal annexation of these territories and the consolidation of an apartheid regime.

While Trump’s and Kushner’s “vision” claims to grant Palestinians a “realistic two-state solution, offering a viable path to Palestinian statehood” at some point in the future, its rewards to Israel are immediate. Trump said in his White House remarks that Washington would recognize Israeli sovereignty over any land that “my vision provides to be part of the State of Israel.”

Taking him at his word, Netanyahu announced that he would organize a vote of his cabinet on Sunday to immediately impose Israeli sovereignty over the vast areas of the occupied West Bank—including the entire Jordan valley—granted to Israel under the Trump plan. Netanyahu’s move followed a demand for such a vote by his defense minister, Naftali Bennett, of the right-wing religious Yamina party, who insisted that Israel would never accept a

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Palestinian state nor "give one centimeter of ground to the Arabs."

The Trump plan was issued in the form of a 181-page document, replete with maps drawing the "conceptual" borders of an expanded Israel and a supposed Palestinian mini-state. The maps make clear the travesty of the supposed Palestinian entity to be carved out of Israeli occupied territories, while masking the full extent of the absurdity of the proposal.

They show a patchwork of Palestinian cantons surrounded by Israeli territory, linked one to another by a series of Israeli-controlled bridges, tunnels and roads. The cantons themselves are peppered with what the plan describes as "Israeli enclave communities," i.e., Zionist settlements that will be walled off, linked by apartheid-style Israeli-only security roads, and protected by Israeli security forces. On the map are five areas inside the supposed Palestinian territory that are marked as "strategic sites," i.e., Israeli military bases. The statement moreover makes clear that the 15 "enclaves" listed cannot be interpreted as "all-inclusive."

Meanwhile, every border, the airspace and access to the sea will be controlled by Israel. The proposal makes the infamous bantustans created by apartheid South Africa seem a model of national self-determination. What is being proposed for the West Bank, as in Gaza, is a giant open-air prison.

In return for this "gift," the Palestinians are ordered to recognize Israel as a "Jewish state," relegating Israeli Palestinians to a permanently oppressed status. They must disarm the Gaza Strip, renounce "terrorism," along with support for the victims of Israeli security forces and accept what amounts to the imposition of a US-organized colonial administration.

Demonstrations erupted in both the West Bank and Gaza even before Trump and Netanyahu spoke at the White House, as details of the proposal became known. The Israel Defense Forces sent reinforcements into the occupied territories in anticipation of far wider protests on Wednesday.

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and the Islamist Hamas movement, which administers Gaza, held a rare joint emergency meeting Tuesday night to discuss the Trump plan.

Abbas stated that the proposal would never be accepted and that discussions were underway on "changing the role of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in accordance with resolutions taken by the PLO." While he did not spell out these changes, the PA has previously threatened to end its policing of the Palestinian population in cooperation with the IDF.

In the US, the Democratic Party, Trump's ostensible opposition, has attempted to prove its own unconditional support for Israel in conjunction with the Trump plan. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi led a congressional delegation to Israel last week to assure state officials that proposed legislation placing conditions on US military aid and requiring Trump to seek congressional approval for a war against Iran should not be seen as a threat to Israeli interests. Leading Democrats have also expressed concerns that the Trump plan exposes too openly the bankruptcy of the entire so-called "peace process" and "two-state solution."

Trump announced on Tuesday that present in the audience were the ambassadors of the Gulf sheikdoms of Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Oman. One purpose of the farce of the Trump plan is to solidify an alliance between the Israeli state and the reactionary Persian Gulf oil monarchies, in preparation for all-out war against Iran. Not present, however, were Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which would play the central roles in pressuring the Palestinian Authority and Hamas to capitulate.

The shameless performance organized by Trump and Netanyahu at the White House on Tuesday represented only one more nail in the coffin of the "two-state solution." For millions of Palestinian workers and youth, the bankruptcy of this tactic has been made abundantly clear, not only by the crimes of Washington and Tel Aviv, but also by the perfidious role played by the Palestinian bourgeoisie.

Neither the Palestinian Authority of Abbas, which has functioned as an outright stooge and policeman for the Israeli occupation, nor the Islamist Hamas faction, has provided any way forward in the struggle against the conditions of oppression, displacement, poverty and violence that have been inflicted upon the Palestinian people.

Putting an end to these conditions can be realized only through the unification of Israeli and Palestinian workers with the working class through the Middle East and internationally in the fight for a Socialist Federation of the Middle East, as part the struggle to put an end to capitalism on a world scale.

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