

Buffalo Forum



**Local Publication of the
U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization**

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December 15, 2017

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ELECTIONS 2018

Pressure Politics, Being Decision Makers and Building the New

Whenever election campaigning is underway, people who are active in fighting for rights are urged to engage in pressure politics. Pressure politics are those that hand over decision-making to the politicians while reducing the role of the people to that of being re-active not pro-active. For elections, we are commonly urged to look at only a few issues, as decided by the candidates, and respond to them, for or against. We are to limit ourselves to responding to various proposals by the candidates and then pressure them to take a "stronger" position. Our right to decide the agenda, the campaign

Pressure Politics and Building the New • 16

MOHAMED ALBANNA DEFENDED IN LACKAWANNA

Respect Who We Elect!

About 150 people rallied in support of Mohamed Albanna, who recently won Lackawanna's First Ward council seat. He defeated John Ingram, 52% to 48%. The rally condemned efforts to block Albanna from taking his seat. "Respect Who We Elect," demonstrators chanted. "Listen to Our Voice," "Albanna is Our Choice," rang out repeatedly at Lackawanna City Hall, as demonstrators defended Albanna as their choice for the First Ward seat.

In the election, Albanna was first challenged by Ingram, a challenge dismissed by the Erie County Board of Elections.

Then Lackawanna Mayor Geoffrey Szymanski tried to block him from running, a case dismissed on technical grounds, as the proper paperwork to bring the case was not filed. Now that Albanna has won the election, Szymanski is again trying to have him removed. The community is firmly rejecting these efforts and taking a democratic stand, insisting that the Mayor, *Respect Who We Elect*.

First Ward is home to many families whose origins are Yemeni. Many are also Muslims. They and many others living in

Respect Who We Elect • 2

HANDS OFF JERUSALEM

Stand with the Palestinians and Their Resistance to U.S./Israeli Occupation

Buffalo Forum firmly supports the broad resistance of the Palestinians and their firm defense of their rights in rejecting President Trump's latest provocation. Trump declared Jerusalem to be the capital of Israel and announced plans to move the U.S. embassy there. It is a

move designed to further strengthen the hand of the Israelis, as seen in their brutal bombing of Gaza and violence against protesters in cities across Palestine. It is also a provocation, a means for the U.S. to try and predict how things will go in

Hands Off Jerusalem • 3

General Strike, Broad Protests Across Palestine Reject U.S. Action on Jerusalem

Palestinians in Jerusalem, Gaza, Bethlehem, and many other cities have risen against the declaration by President Donald Trump that the U.S. considers Jerusalem to be the capital of Israel. The action effectively denies the rights of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who live in Jerusalem and is an attack on

Palestine's right to be. Peoples worldwide, including the U.S., across the Middle East, in Europe, Africa and Latin America, are standing as one with the heroic Palestinian people and their resistance to the Zionist occupation and U.S. attempts to control the affairs of all peoples or destroy what

Broad Protests Across Palestine • 4

Denounce Schumer's Support for Trump's Attack on Palestine

New York Senator Chuck Schumer bragged to *The Weekly Standard* that he was the one who recommended to Trump that Jerusalem be declared the "undivided" capital of Israel. The recommendation follows Schumer's statement in October where he complains that Trump is being indecisive: "President Trump's recent comments suggest his indecisiveness on the embassy's relocation," Schumer wrote in an email to

Denounce Schumer • 3

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I • RESPECT WHO WE ELECT

the First Ward voted to elect Albanna. The targeting of Albanna is part of a long-standing government effort to persecute him for standing up for rights in Lackawanna. As someone trusted and respected, he was responsible for gathering funds from families across Western New York, bundling them and sending them home to families in Yemen. This method of transferring funds was common among immigrant communities and in the Buffalo area Yemenis in particular. However, it was outside the U.S. banking structure and for that, was seen as a threat by the government.

As part of the U.S. attack on Muslims and Arabs more broadly following 9/11, these types of independent methods of transferring large amounts of funds were targeted, as were many Muslim charities, all as a means to assert U.S. control. Albanna was among a number of individuals across the country unjustly charged and jailed, in his case for his service to Yemeni families in the region.

Lackawanna as a community was also targeted. This included the unjust raid on the community by the FBI in 2002 in the name of "finding" the Lackawanna Six, young men the government had been spying on for more than a year and knew exactly where they were. Instead of simply arresting them, a major raid took place at night, blocks cordoned off, helicopters overhead, homes raided, Muslim women humiliated, all to terrorize the community.

Cameras were placed at the mosque and soccer field and remained there for long periods, a form of collective punishment. FBI



agents harassed youth on their way to school and the community in general. All in the name of the war on terror, which solved no problem and has meant war and hardship, at home and abroad. The Lackawanna Six were never brought to trial and instead were forced to plead guilty, with the government using the threat of sending them all to Guantánamo and keeping them there indefinitely. The entire attack on the community and later Albanna as a leader in the community, were all part of the U.S. campaign of terrorism, against Afghanistan, Iraq, and Muslims more generally.

Albanna's conviction is what is currently being used to try and block him from taking his seat. The Lackawanna charter states that a person cannot serve if they have been "convicted of a crime or offense involving moral turpitude." The Board of Elections determined that his conviction was not one of "moral turpitude" and therefore he was eligible. Mayor Szymski insists that it is and has filed a lawsuit, expected to be heard in court December 21. The community is taking its stand and making clear, Albanna is their choice and all should respect his election.



I • HANDS OFF JERUSALEM

Protest in Gaza, defending Palestinian rights and rejecting Trump's declaration of Jerusalem as capital of Israel

conditions where they are no longer able to make predictions. This brinkmanship, as seen in Korea, with Iran, and now with the Palestinians, is dangerous and threatens increased violence and potentially broader war. Palestinians have met this effort to intimidate them with a broad storm of resistance, in Gaza, all throughout the occupied territories and in Jerusalem itself, home to hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.

Their continuing protests, affirming their rights, are being supported by on-going actions worldwide. As one the peoples are rejecting U.S. efforts to crush resistance and impose their dictate, rallying instead to defend the rights of the Palestinians and demand an end to the U.S./Israeli occupation.

President Trump, in defending U.S. actions, failed to even mention the rights of the Palestinians. Instead he made a threat:

"It is time for the many who desire peace to expel the extremists from their midst. It is time for all civilized nations, and people, to respond to disagreement with reasoned debate — not violence. This coming from an administration that has expanded the U.S. military forces in Africa, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan; carries out the crime of massive war games against Korea; and is acting to further criminalize dissent at home while promoting increased police violence.

It cannot be said that declaring Jerusalem the capital of Israel is either civilized or reasoned. It is an open provocation designed to justify further aggression against Palestine while declaring resistance "uncivilized." It is a demand that any the U.S. has proclaimed as "extremist," which includes many in Palestine, must be "expelled," — that is driven from Palestine. The "peace" Trump

is demanding is one where the Palestinians relinquish their rights — their right of return to their homes and lands; their right to resist occupation, their right to be, as a people and nation. While Israel continues to expand its illegal seizure of Palestinian lands, its brutal attacks on human rights, including continued expulsion of Palestinians from their homes.

The U.S. and Israel have never succeeded in their efforts to expel and exterminate the Palestinians and this latest action, as can already be seen, will fail as well. The world's people stand with the heroic Palestinians and their just struggle for their rights. *Buffalo Forum* urges all to join in defending Palestine and rejecting U.S. actions on Jerusalem and all U.S./Israeli crimes.

*Free, Free Palestine!
Hands Off Jerusalem!*

I • DENOUNCE SCHUMER

The Times of Israel. "As someone who strongly believes that Jerusalem is the undivided capital of Israel, I am calling for the U.S. Embassy in Israel to be relocated to Jerusalem. Moving the embassy as soon as possible would appropriately commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Jerusalem's reunification and show the world that the U.S. definitively acknowledges Jerusalem

as Israel's capital."

Schumer is notorious for his support for the Israeli Zionists and for the massive U.S. aid and political backing given to Israel. He, like Governor Cuomo, often visit Israel when it is committing the crime of bombing Gaza. They have repeatedly shown their support for the occupation of Palestine and the brutal violence imposed on Gaza.

As protests worldwide have made clear, Jerusalem is in fact the capital of Palestine and it is Israel that has divided and occupied it. It is the continued U.S. backing of the occupation and the Zionist violence against the Palestinians that are crimes. Trump's latest provocation confirms that the U.S. is guilty of these crimes, as they could not occur without U.S. backing.

I • BROAD PROTESTS ACROSS PALESTINE

they cannot control. Strikes and days of rage continue across Palestine, and solidarity protests are being held outside U.S. embassies and consulates worldwide. In the U.S. demonstrations took place in Washington, D.C., New York City, Chicago, San Francisco and elsewhere.

On December 7 a massive general strike, called for by Palestinian organizations, brought daily life in Palestine to a halt. Stores and institutions, including schools and universities, closed their doors in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank, condemning U.S. support for Israeli occupation and aggression. Israel used Trump's support for further illegal expansion and aggression. This included the crime of bombing Gaza and continuing to maintain the blockade and plans for 14,000 more illegal settlements, including in Jerusalem.

The various Palestinian organizations joined in declaring December 7, 8 and 9 days of rage throughout Palestine and worldwide, calling for actions condemning the U.S. actions on Jerusalem and its continued military and political backing for Israel. Palestinians all over the West Bank and occupied Jerusalem carried out protests at check points, while Israeli Occupation Forces responded with teargas and sound grenades.

In addition to various demonstrations, at Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, the Waqf, which oversees the holy Muslim site, shut



off all the lights that normally illuminate one of Jerusalem's most recognizable landmarks — the golden dome atop the mosque. In the hour or so after Trump's December 6 speech, many Palestinians in the Old City also turned off their lights in protest. In Bethlehem, municipal authorities, who are mainly Christian, shut off the lights on the massive Christmas tree erected in Manger Square. The 'Christmas blackout' also included the Christmas tree in Beit Sahour and the one in Ramallah.

Israel Viciously Attacks Protesters While U.S. Remains Silent

Israeli forces responded to the many protest

marches and rallies with massive military force, invading Palestinian neighborhoods and firing live ammunition, tear gas, rubber-coated steel bullets and other lethal and semi-lethal weapons at the demonstrators. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society reported that its medical teams treated at least 270 people injured in protests in the West Bank and Gaza on December 8, with two people killed in Gaza by Israeli occupation force.

Medics treated wounded Palestinians who had participated in protests in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ramallah, Nablus, Tulkarem, Qalqilia, Jenin, Hebron, Khan Yunis and central Gaza. In Nablus, more than 10,000 protesters took to the streets in several areas of the city and surrounding areas. Fifty-seven were wounded by invading Israeli forces in Huwwara, Beit Furiq, and Nablus city. Thirty-two Palestinian protesters were wounded by Israeli troops in Tulkarem, in the northern part of the West Bank. Most were wounded by rubber-coated steel bullets fired at the demonstrators.

In Bethlehem, thousands of people marched in the streets – dozens of people suffered the effects of tear gas inhalation, and five were hospitalized after having been hit by rubber-coated steel bullets.

The U.S. remained silent on this violence, while the peoples worldwide stepped up their support of the Palestinians and their resistance to occupation, in Jerusalem and throughout Palestine.



FREE, FREE PALESTINE



HANDS OFF JERUSALEM



Palestinian Rights Coalition Strongly Opposes Trump's Recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's Capital

U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights (USCPR)

The U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights (USCPR), a national coalition of hundreds of groups working for freedom, justice, and equality, strongly opposes the Trump administration's intent to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and relocate the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv.

Recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel flies in the face of international law, the consensus of the international community, and decades of U.S. foreign policy. Accepting Israel's illegal annexation of Jerusalem to Israel, most notably occupied East Jerusalem, legitimizes Israel's illegal actions in the city, including its ongoing displacement and disenfranchisement of the city's Palestinian residents.

Such a move legitimizes Jerusalem's current separate-and-unequal – otherwise known as apartheid – regime between Israeli Jews and Palestinians, which

discriminates against Palestinians in municipal planning services, taxation, housing and education, and is designed to demographically engineer a permanent Jewish majority. Further, it will legitimize Israel's violations in Jerusalem of the Fourth Geneva Convention, including but not limited to its demolition of Palestinian homes, its illegal settlements, and apartheid wall.

Yousef Munayyer, USCPR Executive Director said, "A decision such as this is both morally wrong and politically dangerous. Not only is Donald Trump deliberately insulting the Palestinian people, but also Arabs and Muslims around the world... The United States has attempted to shepherd the so-called 'peace process' on the basis that it can play the role of mediator but by clearly adopting an Israeli position as its own, it makes clear it is not

even pretending anymore."

For 70 years, the US has given Israel tacit approval and diplomatic cover to steal Palestinian land, build illegal Jewish settlements, and deny Palestinians in East Jerusalem and elsewhere their rights. In spite of this, official U.S. policy has always opposed recognizing Israel's claims to sovereignty over Jerusalem. Trump's recognition does away with any pretense that the U.S. is an unbiased peace mediator, and further endorses Israel's illegal actions and abuses of Palestinian human rights in the city. This move is but another example of Trump emboldening Israel's extreme right-wing government and settler movement, and drives home the shared values of Trump and Netanyahu's right-wing governments, both of which incite and exploit racism, xenophobia, and fear for political gain.

Jewish Voice for Peace Unequivocally Condemns Trump's Announcement on Jerusalem

Jewish Voice for Peace, December 6, 2017

Jewish Voice for Peace unequivocally condemns President Trump's announcement that he will begin the process of moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem as part of recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, a move that would make the U.S. the only country in the world to do so.

This move is counter to international law and is a clear attempt by Israel and the U.S. to consolidate Israeli annexation of land. This move is reckless, endangering the lives of Palestinians and Israelis on the ground.

Since Israel unilaterally annexed the eastern half of Jerusalem in 1967, the international community has considered it to be occupied territory. By recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, Trump is endorsing Israeli policies of dispossession and forcible transfer, further harming the rights and lives of Palestinians and crushing any hope for a peace based on equality and freedom for everyone in the region.

Jerusalem is home to people of multiple faiths and religions, including almost 40 percent of whom are Palestinian. This move irrevocably demonstrates that the U.S. and Israel are colluding to violate the rights of Palestinians and sabotage any real possibility for an equitable agreement.

Rebecca Vilkomerson, JVP Executive Director:

"For seventy years, the U.S. has given Israel tacit approval to steal Palestinian land, build illegal Jewish settlements, and deny Palestinians in East Jerusalem and elsewhere their rights. The Trump-Netanyahu alliance takes these ongoing policies to the next level and is reckless, irresponsible and endangers the lives of Palestinians and Israelis."

Rabbi Alissa Wise, JVP Deputy Director:

"Jerusalem is a symbol of holiness and hope for many people of many religions

the world over. Beginning the process of moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem not only flies in the face of the international legal consensus, but also furthers the agenda of those who seek to re-cast a struggle for land, rights and sovereignty into a religious conflict."



Israeli Illegal Confiscation of Palestinian Land and Eviction of Civilians

Palestine Observer Mission to UN, November 14, 2017

(Statement by the UN's Permanent Observer for Palestine to the UN's Secretary General)

Excellency,

I regret to inform you that, in the absence of any serious measures of accountability pursuant to Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) and the countless other relevant United Nations resolutions demanding the cessation of Israel's illegal policies and measures in Occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, and an end to its more than half-century occupation, the occupying Power [Israel] continues with its flagrant violations and methodical destruction of the two-State solution.

Following its recent provocative announcements regarding plans for the illegal construction of thousands more settlement units across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Israeli Government is forging ahead with its colonization and annexation schemes, escalating its confiscation of Palestinian land, demolition of Palestinian homes and properties, and its forced displacement of the Palestinian civilian population. This has included ongoing measures aimed at the forced transfer of thousands of Bedouin Palestinians from their lands. All of this is being done in grave breach of international law and direct and repeated violation of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

Earlier this month, demolition orders for approximately 60 homes and structures and evacuation notices have been delivered by the Israeli occupying forces to Palestinian residents in the Ein al-Hilweh and Umm al-Jamal villages in the northern Jordan Valley of the Occupied West Bank. If implemented these orders would result



in the dispossession and forced transfer of at least 300 Palestinian civilians from the area, which has been designated for further settlement expansion by the occupying Power. In this regard, recent reports have revealed Israel's intentions to advance settlement construction in the Jordan Valley and to double the number of settlers it has illegally implanted there from 6,000 to at least 12,000 settlers.

Palestinian farmers in the village of Shofeh, near Tulkarem, have also received notifications from the Israeli occupying forces for the expropriation of several plots of agricultural land for expansion of a nearby Israeli settlement and its infrastructure. The occupying Power is also moving ahead with plans to confiscate another 50 dunums of Palestinian land in the Bethlehem area, along with numerous other plans for the demolition of Palestinian homes and seizure of Palestinian properties throughout other areas of the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

That this relentless theft of land and the continual forced dispossession and displacement of the Palestinian civilian population are central to Israel's attempts to alter the demography, character and geographic realities on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is undeniable, and settlement activities are the main

vehicle for implementation of this illegal colonial agenda. Moreover, as all such actions are being perpetrated without consequence, the Israeli Government, and its extremist settlers have clearly been further emboldened to continue and, even intensify, their land grab and crimes against the Palestinian people.

In this regard, we recall the Security Council's unequivocal

condemnation, in resolution 2334 (2016) of "all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, including inter alia, the construction and expansion of settlements, transfer of Israeli settlers, confiscation of land, demolition of homes and displacement of Palestinian civilians," and the demand that Israel, the occupying Power, immediately and completely cease all settlement activities and that it fully respect all of its legal obligations.

In light of Israel's blatant and deliberate contempt and continuing non-compliance with UN resolutions and the applicable provisions of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, we must also recall the Council's call, in resolution 2334 (2016), on all States to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967. Such distinction, politically, legally and otherwise, have become ever more urgent as Israel has proven that in the absence of measures of accountability, it intends to persist with its grave violations against the Palestinian people, with its colonization and attempts

Israel's Illegal Actions • 9

Israel to Construct 14,000 Illegal Settlement Units in Jerusalem

Palestine Information Center, December 8, 2017

Emboldened by U.S. President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the Israeli government is considering pushing ahead with plans to build around 14,000 new settler units in the city.

Under the plan, pursued by Israeli housing minister Yoav Galant, 5,000 units would be built in the northern parts of the city and just outside Ramallah, Israeli media reported. There would be 1,000 units built in East Jerusalem, while the

remaining 8,000 units were to be built in the city's western neighborhoods.

Trump declared the city as Israel's capital on December 6 and said that he would relocate the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, in a move that has drawn fire from the Palestinians and their backers around the world.

"Following President Trump's historic declaration, I intend to advance and strengthen building in Jerusalem," Galant was quoted as saying.

"There are no more excuses. There are no more reasons why we should not build in the city, when the president of the United States views it as the undisputed capital of Israel," other cabinet members were quoted as saying by Israeli media.

Much of the international community regard Israeli settlements as illegal because the territories were captured by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War and are hence subject to the Geneva Conventions, which forbid construction on occupied lands.

8 • ISRAEL'S ILLEGAL ACTIONS

at annexation of the Palestinian land, and with its destruction of the viability of the two-State solution.

It is past high time for serious, concrete measures to be adopted by the international community to compel Israel, the occupying Power to cease its violations and comply with international law and UN resolutions. Failure to do so will only allow for continuation of these crimes against the Palestinian people and the prolongation of the abhorrent occupation, with far-reaching and negative consequences for the prospects for Palestinian-Israeli peace and for peace and stability in the region.

In closing, we highlight the Security Council's declared determination to examine all practical ways and means to secure the full implementation of its relevant resolutions, and appeal for immediate

action in this regard to ensure the necessary protections for the Palestinian people living under Israeli occupation, in accordance with international humanitarian law, and to salvage the remaining prospects for realizing the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and a just and lasting solution, in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions, the Madrid principles, Arab Peace Initiative and



Protest at Beit El Checkpoint, Palestine

Quartet Roadmap.

This letter is in follow-up to our 620 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 11 October 2017 (A/ES-10/_-S/2017/_) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestin-

ian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Feda Abdelhady-Nasser

Charge' d'Affaires, Deputy Permanent UN Observer



Three takeaways: Trump's Jerusalem Declaration and Palestinian reactions

Michael Schaeffer Omer-Man, 972mag.com, December 7, 2017

Let us not pretend that there was a peace process for Donald Trump to obstruct.

Three takeaways:

1. To those who are worried that Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel will create an insurmountable roadblock to achieving the two-state solution, I remind you that on at least four separate occasions in recent years (one, two, three, four) Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to never withdraw Israeli troops from the West Bank. That's surmountable?

Let's be real. There has been no two-state option on the table at least since the late spring of 2014, before the Gaza war broke out, and probably not since 2008, when the Olmert-Abbas talks ended abruptly because the Israeli prime minister was indicted on corruption charges.

To argue that Donald Trump's decision to move the American embassy to Jerusalem is the straw that broke the camel's back is to ignore not just all of the actually insurmountable issues that have prevented an agreement in decades of peace talks, but also the fact that the Israeli government is explicitly not interested in allowing the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state.

2. In his speech on December 6, President Trump did not even acknowledge the idea that there is an East Jerusalem distinct from West Jerusalem. Israel annexed the territory known as East Jerusalem after the 1967 Six-Day War and incorporated it into Jerusalem's municipal boundaries. Around 300,000 Palestinians live in East Jerusalem; the vast majority do not have Israeli citizenship. Israel annexed the land but not the people. Furthermore, entire neighborhoods of East Jerusalem have been separated from the city over the past decade by the 26-foot concrete wall built by Israel.

By not acknowledging the existence of East Jerusalem, and thereby recognizing Jerusalem as the single "unified" city Israel pretends it to be, Trump effectively recognized the illegal and



Protest in Khan Unis, Palestine

unilateral annexation of East Jerusalem. Furthermore, by mentioning Muslim connections to Al Aqsa but not the Palestinian national significance of and ties to the city of Jerusalem, he did away with the illusion of even-handedness in the United States' approach to that aspect of the conflict.

3. Top Palestinian officials responded to Trump's announcement Wednesday night with their own declaration — that the United States had effectively lost or withdrawn from its role as broker in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Before delving into whether that is true, or more significantly, whether to take it seriously, let's remember one thing.

The United States has never been an honest broker in Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. As former American negotiator Aaron David Miller wrote over a decade ago: "For far too long, many American officials involved in Arab-Israeli peacemaking, myself included, have acted as Israel's attorney, catering and coordinating with the Israelis at the expense of successful peace negotiations." For decades that was a price the Palestinians were willing to pay because it was nevertheless the best game in town. Now that Trump is throwing out the playbook, the Palestinian leadership, especially with Hamas back at the table, may decide that no peace process is better than a Trump-led process.

The real test will, of course, be in the

coming months, as Jared Kushner and Jason Greenblatt (assuming the former is still in the White House by then) attempt to get their elusive peace plan rolling. Will the Palestinian leadership meet with American officials? We'll see if they meet with Vice President Pence on his upcoming trip. Will they entertain whatever ideas the Americans bring to the table? My bet is yes, because the other option is to fulfill the perennial threat of "handing back the keys."

PLO Secretary General and Chief Palestinian Negotiator Saeb Erekat, known for his blustery statements, including years' worth of unrealized resignations, stated Wednesday night that: "Now is the time to transform the struggle for one-state with equal rights for everyone living in historic Palestine, from the river to the sea." While it is unlikely that the Palestinian leadership will abandon the prospect of independent statehood and national self-determination, it is entirely possible that they could change strategy in one way or another, or at least add new dimensions to the struggle for independence.

As journalist Dalia Hatuqa wrote on Twitter Wednesday night: "The U.S. had basically thrown Abbas under the bus for the 100th time. He now has nothing to offer Palestinians and he can't use the 'internationalization of the cause' as a strategy. He also can't justify his opposition to BDS [Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions] anymore."

Oh Jerusalem: Requiem for the two-state solution

Omar Karmi, *electronicintifada.net*, December 6, 2017

He may have small hands, but US President Donald Trump appears to have a big foot. And with his decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, he has shoved it squarely up the part of conventional international Middle East peacemaking diplomacy that never sees the sun.

So far, so good, you might think. Decades of international peacemaking efforts have, after all, failed, as Trump said in his statement, to make peace. What he didn't add, though, is that it has also largely provided cover for Israel to continue its colonization of occupied territory. And nowhere has Israel done so more egregiously than in Jerusalem itself.

Israel's main backer in this has long been the United States. And even though almost from the outset, US policy clearly stipulated that settlements are illegal under international law, successive US administrations have only rewarded Israeli settlement building over the past 40 or so years of peace diplomacy with ever greater financial and military aid.

Why not end this charade, one that has done so little to achieve peace and secure justice for wronged parties?

But that would be to misread "art-of-the-deal" Trump whose staff, even while transitioning into the White House, was eagerly lobbying foreign countries on behalf of Israel.

The US president's decision has little to do with ending any charades and even less to do with justice for the little guy. Just read his speech to AIPAC before he was elected. It is a play for his own pro-Israel right-wing and evangelical base. It is an assertion of US primacy over international legitimacy. It could have repercussions for generations. And it is the culmination of decades of rabid lobbying in Washington that has rendered intelligible debate on Palestine impossible, succeeded in blaming the victim and ensnared most of America's legislature. Among these dark Satanic mills

Jerusalem, an ancient city that has been settled for thousands of years, is crucial to resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

It is at the center of both Jewish and Palestinian nationalism. It contains some of the most important Jewish, Christian and Islamic religious sites in the world.

For Muslims, Jerusalem was the first direction of prayer and ought still be a part of the annual pilgrimage enjoined on the faithful. Most of its modern history has been Islamic. In fact, bar a hundred or so years of Christian crusader interjection, the city was under Muslim rule from 637 until the British ousted the Ottomans in 1917 only to create a Palestine mandate and promptly promise European Jews a homeland there.

Those 1,000 years – give or take – of the city's modern history and the resonance the city holds for Muslims everywhere have been completely ignored in the Trump administration's formula that simply sees Jerusalem as "the capital the Jewish people established in ancient times" as well as today's seat of the Israeli government.

And so has international law.

The only internationally agreed formula for the city to date came with the 1947 partition plan that envisaged the city as a separated body under international administration belonging to neither a Palestinian nor a Jewish state. That is why even the US, until now, has not recognized Israel's claim to sovereignty over the city – any part of the city.

And it is why international consensus in the context of a two-state solution has been that the city will be divided into two capitals, one in the western part for Israel and one in the east for Palestine, but only in the context of a final and mutually negotiated resolution to the conflict.

That Trump is willing to put all this aside is a testament not only to the strength of pro-Israel lobbying efforts in the US



– Trump's description of Israel as "one of the most successful democracies in the world" is straight out of the AIPAC playbook – but to his commitment to a kind of nationalism that sees power and consensus-building merely as instruments to achieve narrow interests. And the more power one has, the less consensus one needs. Historic compromise

The status of Jerusalem is one of the so-called Palestinian constants – the others being statehood and refugees – that the late Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat invoked after signing what he saw as the ultimate compromise, the 1993 Oslo accords. Those accords saw Palestinians reduced to agitating for statehood on territory Israel occupied in the 1967 War, amounting to 22 percent of historic Palestine, but very definitely including East Jerusalem.

Israel has always had a maximalist position on Jerusalem, however. It unilaterally annexed the whole city immediately after conquering the eastern part in 1967 and has ever since called it its "eternal and undivided" capital. Israel never saw the Oslo accords as a Palestinian compromise and therefore did not seize the opportunity to sign a peace deal with Arafat.

That opportunity has now well and truly passed. Even a leader as pliable as Mahmoud Abbas will find it hard to sell a peace process where one of the three pillars he himself has stipulated has already been removed – and where the one on refugees is widely understood to have

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been effectively amputated too.

There will be some wriggle room. Trump has not committed himself to any specific geographic part of Jerusalem as being Israel's capital. He has not ruled out a future division of the city. He will continue to sign the waiver stopping the US embassy move for another six months and, in practice, nothing will change for a while, perhaps even for the remainder of his presidency.

Abbas has staked his entire leadership on a peace process and may well cling to these broken shards of hope, hands bleeding, hoping that Trump can now wring what in Washington is known as "concessions" from Israel (otherwise known as adherence to international law).

Yet even Abbas must see that Trump's actions have in effect spelled the end for any hope of a negotiated two-state solution. Even if it is simply a gambit to shore up support at home, and even if Trump has no intention of actually moving the embassy, only of being seen to fulfill a campaign promise, the damage is done.

A threshold has been passed. Now

no US president – not in a climate where the pro-Israel lobby in America is so influential that in June a resolution celebrating the 50th anniversary of the occupation of Jerusalem passed the US Senate by 90 votes to zero – can walk this back. Game changer

Six months before he was elected president, Trump gave a speech to the lobbyists' lobby, AIPAC. It was a campaign speech, intended to curry favor with a specific demographic. But he has since proven good to his word. He promised he would tear up the Iran nuclear deal. He has begun the process.

He promised he would move the US embassy. He has now taken the first step (as he was keen to point out on Wednesday).

He also asserted that the Palestinians "must come to the table knowing that the bond between the United States and Israel is absolutely, totally unbreakable." While few Palestinians doubted this anyway, some held out hope that simply through the force of moral persuasion, sympathy for the underdog, legality and in the interests of international order,

someone, somewhere in Washington would listen, eventually.

That can no longer be the case. No one, not Abbas or all those Palestinian decision makers and politicians who genuinely advocate or simply have vested interests in a peace process, can now seriously believe or pretend there is anything but hush money to be gained from Washington.

What then? Turn to Europe? Unlikely to be of much use. The Arab world? Ditto. Unity with Hamas would seem to take on extra urgency instead, but what would that entail for any Palestinian strategy?

And if there is no hope of a two-state solution, what is the role of the Palestinian Authority? Why persist with it?

There will be anger. There will be pain. And there will be change; deep, fundamental change to the logic that has dominated the whole conflict for nearly quarter of a century.

That at least should be a blessing. But at what cost in the meantime?

(Omar Karmi is a former Jerusalem and Washington, DC, correspondent for The National newspaper.)

The New Balfour Declaration

Amjad Iraqi, December 10, 2017

Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital echoes Lord Balfour's denial of Palestinian rights a century ago. Today, however, Palestinians are more empowered to challenge it.

During a debate in the British Cabinet regarding its policy toward Palestine in 1919, Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour informed Lord George Curzon, another senior statesman, that the government was not interested in "consulting the wishes of the present [Arab] inhabitants of the country" to help formulate its decisions. The great powers were "committed to Zionism," he said, and Zionism was "of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land."

Balfour's sentiments echoed throughout President Donald Trump's speech on Wednesday when he recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and announced the relocation of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv. Trump made no mention of the Palestinians' history and belonging to the city, or the fact that over a third of its residents identify as Palestinian. He said that he would only support a two-state solution — and presumably, a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem — if it was "agreed to by both sides." The U.S. decision, he insisted, "is nothing more or less than a recognition of reality."

The irony of Trump's timing is not lost on Palestinians: last month marked the centenary of Lord Balfour's infamous letter to Lord Walter Rothschild, a prominent Zionist activist, which promised British support for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

Like Trump's announcement, the Balfour Declaration was the outcome of several aligning interests and efforts, including the Zionist movement's intensive lobbying, state officials' evangelical Christian beliefs, and the imperial power's strategic goals for the region. It not only prioritized Zionist



Palestinians defending their rights in Jerusalem

claims over Arab rights, but elevated the Zionist movement from a nascent organization into a major political force.

In contrast, Britain actively interfered in Palestinian Arab affairs and repressed local resistance to its rule. [...]

It is too soon to tell whether Trump's proclamation will have a similarly profound mark on the conflict; but in many ways, his speech has already inflicted significant damage. Like Balfour before him, Trump has energized Israel's ethno-nationalist movement and dismissed the Palestinians' indigenous right to their homeland.

By breaking with the international consensus, Trump has made the occupation of East Jerusalem an acceptable political norm; other allies like the Czech Republic, which declared West Jerusalem as Israel's capital soon after Trump's speech, may now be emboldened to follow suit. Moreover, by rewarding its colonial policies with a major symbolic victory, the U.S. has incentivized the Israeli government to complete its annexation of other parts of the occupied West Bank without fear of American backlash.

But in spite of these worsening realities, Palestinians are more empowered to

overcome them today than their ancestors a century ago. The U.S. has further proven the façade of the peace process and of its ability to be an honest broker. Members of the UN Security Council roundly condemned Trump's decision, and European states are being pressured to respond with firmer policy actions.

Grassroots movements around the world are rallying public support for the Palestinians, including through BDS and with the support of Jewish allies. Palestinians are making their voices heard in political forums, in the media, and on the streets, with many hoping to emulate last summer's campaign of civil disobedience in defense of Al-Aqsa.

Thus despite his powerful legacy, the Palestinians that Lord Balfour so willfully ignored have not been erased. Writing to Prime Minister David Lloyd George in 1919, Balfour admitted that, "The weak point of our position is of course that in the case of Palestine we deliberately and rightly decline to accept the principle of self-determination." A hundred years later, the demand for that right has only grown stronger.

UN Resolutions on Occupied East Jerusalem

aljazeera.com, December 6, 2017

U.S. President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital on December 6, overturning decades of international consensus on the highly contested city, half of which was occupied and annexed by Israel following the 1967 War.

In 1980, Israel passed a law that declared Jerusalem the "complete and united" capital of Israel, in violation of international law. Below are highlights of the numerous UN resolutions regarding the city since the 1967 conflict.

UN Security Council

Resolution 242: November 22, 1967, the unanimously adopted resolution called on Israel to withdraw its armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict.

Resolution 252: May 21, 1968, asked Israel to cancel all activities in Jerusalem, and condemned occupation of any land through armed aggression. It also demanded Israel "desist from taking any further action which tends to change the status" of the city.

Resolution 267: July 3, 1969, confirmed resolution 252, reaffirming that "acquisition of territory by military conquest is inadmissible".

Resolution 271: September 15, 1969, condemned the extensive damage caused by arson to the Holy Al Aqsa Mosque, a building under the military occupation of Israel. It called on Israel to observe the provisions of the Geneva Conventions and "refrain from causing any hindrance to the discharge of the established functions of the Supreme Muslim Council of Jerusalem", including "its plans for the maintenance and repair of the Islamic Holy Places" within the city.

Resolution 298: September 25, 1971, confirmed in "the clearest possible terms" that all actions taken by Israel to change the status of Jerusalem, such as land confiscation, were illegal.

Resolution 465: March 1, 1980, demanded Israel to stop the planning and construction of settlements in territories

occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem. It also called on Israel to "dismantle the existing settlements".

Resolution 476: June 30, 1980, reaffirmed the "overriding necessity for ending the prolonged occupation of Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967" and reiterated that all measures which had altered the status of Jerusalem were "null and void" and had to be rescinded.

Resolution 478: August 20, 1980, condemned in "the strongest terms" the enactment of Israeli law proclaiming a change in status of Jerusalem. The resolution called on all states "that have established diplomatic missions" in Jerusalem to withdraw them from the city.

Resolution 672: October 12, 1990, expressed alarm at the violence which claimed more than twenty Palestinian lives at the al-Aqsa Mosque on October 8, 1990. The resolution condemned the acts of violence committed by Israeli security forces and referred to Israel as an "occupying power".

Resolution 1073: September 28, 1996, expressed concern about developments in Jerusalem relating to Israel's opening of an entrance to a tunnel near the al-Aqsa Mosque, which resulted in a number of civilian deaths, and called for "the safety and protection of Palestinian civilians to be ensured".

Resolution 1322: October 7, 2000, denounced the visit made by Israeli opposition leader, Ariel Sharon, to the al-Aqsa Mosque and the "subsequent violence there and at other holy places" which resulted in more than 80 Palestinian deaths.

Resolution 1397: March 12, 2002, called on Palestinian and Israeli leaders to resume the peace process through negotiations regarding a political settlement.

Resolution 2334: December 23, 2016, condemned Israel's construction of settlements in all territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem. The UNSC

emphasized it would not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 conflict lines, and stressed that the "cessation of all Israeli settlement activities is essential for salvaging the two-State solution". UN General Assembly

Resolution 2253: July 4, 1967, expressed concern at Israel's attempts to change the status of Jerusalem and called for "all measures already taken" to be rescinded and no further such action.

Resolution 36/15: October 28, 1981, determined that Israel's transformation of Jerusalem, including historical, cultural and religious sites, constituted a "flagrant violation of the principles of international law". Such acts, the resolution stated, "constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East".

Resolution 55/130: February 28, 2001, demanded that Israel cooperate with a special committee set up to "investigate Israeli practices affecting the human rights of Palestinian people and other Arabs" in the occupied territories. The resolution expressed "grave concern" about the situation in Jerusalem "as a result of Israeli practices and measures [especially] the excessive use of force which has resulted in more than 160 Palestinian deaths".

Resolution 10/14: December 12, 2003, requested the International Court of Justice to provide an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's construction of a wall in the "Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem".

Resolution 60/104: January 18, 2006, requested the Special Committee, "pending complete termination of the Israeli occupation", continue to investigate Israeli actions in "the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories" since 1967.

Resolution 70/89: December 15, 2015, condemned the continuation of Israeli

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NEW YORK STATE

Issues of War and Peace are Key in State Elections

It is often said that issues of war and peace are strictly a federal matter and not of concern when it comes to state-level elections. The military is federal, the president wages wars and supposedly states have little to do with it. In fact, militarization of life, integral to war and war preparations, impact every state and even local issues. This includes issues of funding, where the Pentagon secures nearly \$1 trillion every year, while public schools, public housing and public healthcare are starved for funds. Certainly state officials are in a position to at least condemn war funding and demand increased federal funding for rights. They could go further and withhold that portion of state taxes that goes to wars, on the basis that U.S. wars are illegal. Having state officials contend on this issue would contribute to peace.

State officials also play a role in the location of military bases. New York State, for example, is home to a major drone base, Hancock, near Syracuse. Drone warfare is criminal, it is aggression against dozens of countries that the U.S. is not at war with, it kills large numbers of civilians, and attacks the sovereignty of many countries, in the Middle East, Africa, and worldwide. State officials are in a position to demand the grounding of all drones, as necessary to stop illegal

and unjust activity. Additionally, for the Niagara Air Force Base, there is a proposal to close it as a base and turn it into a solar farm. Such an action undermines war efforts and contributes to a peace economy by providing sustainable energy and jobs. It is an anti-war proposal state and local officials should support.

In addition, many public schools and universities pay the military to run programs in the schools and carry out recruitment. Youth are being trained to follow orders and submit, something required to carry out illegal wars against the peoples abroad. At the very least, officials can support having an anti-war alternative in the schools. Better still would be the removal of the military from our public schools and full funding for all youth to guarantee their rights to education and jobs. Youth should not be recruited to carry out crimes, which is what serving in the military requires at this time. Public tax dollars should not be used to fund such recruitment. This is a local and state issue of concern to all. Such issues should be raised with candidates so as to generate serious discussion on all matters relating to war and peace.

U.S. wars and aggression, and the government example that such violence is the means to solve problems, promotes

and contributes to violence in society. It is little wonder that when use of force is widely used and proclaimed necessary by government, that individuals in society will act in the same manner. A pro-war government is a pro-violence, anti-human government. State officials have a duty to stand against such violence.

It is also well known that local and state police forces are being militarized, including being armed, by the Pentagon, with tanks, helicopters, automatic weapons and even grenade launchers. Buffalo recently purchased large numbers of automatic weapons and also have a tank. For what purpose? Like with the military, it is for use against civilians, for urban warfare right here at home. Police need disarming and condemned for their use of force, including killing unarmed individuals. Militarization of the police forces, both in terms of weaponry and in seeing youth, especially African Americans, as a threat to be suppressed with violence, is a state and local issue. It is not separate from the pro-war federal government, rather it is an integral part of it. What is needed is an anti-war government and peace economy, at all levels of government. And local and state officials can take steps in this direction and should be held accountable for doing so.

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occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as a violation of international law. The resolution also denounced Israel's "unlawful construction" of a wall inside occupied territories, including "in and around East Jerusalem".

Resolution 71/96: December 23, 2016, reaffirmed that the Geneva Convention, relative to the protection of civilians during conflict, was applicable to the "Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967".

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)
150: November 27, 1996, stated the "Old

City of Jerusalem" was inscribed on the endangered world heritage list, and labeled Israel's opening of an entrance to a tunnel near the al-Aqsa Mosque "an act which has offended religious sensibilities in the world".

159: June 15, 2000, expressed concern at "the measures which continue to impede the free access of Palestinians to Jerusalem".

184: April 2, 2010, expressed "deep concern" regarding Israeli archeological works, including excavations, at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem. The resolution stated the works "contradict UNESCO decisions and conventions".

192: January 13, 2014, criticized Israel's "continuous, [and] intrusive"

archeological demolitions, excavations and works in East Jerusalem.

196: May 22, 2015, stated "deep regret" at Israel's "refusal to implement previous UNESCO decisions concerning Jerusalem" and called for the deployment of a permanent expert to East Jerusalem "to report on a regular basis about all the aspects covering all UNESCO fields of competence in East Jerusalem".

202: November 18, 2017, expressed regret at Israel's refusal to "implement the UNESCO request to appoint a permanent representative to be stationed in East Jerusalem", and stressed the "urgent need to implement the UNESCO reactive monitoring mission to the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls."

— Pressure Politics, Being Decision Makers and Building the New — from page 1

platform and be pro-active in deciding candidates to represent that platform is eliminated. The decision-making role is handed over to the politicians, who can “accept” the pressure or not. And when they do not, our role again is not to be decision makers, but rather more vigorously “put their feet to the fire.” The basic orientation is one stuck in the old, where power is in the hands of the politicians and we the people are marginalized and given a limited role.

Building the new brings the issue of who decides to the fore, with the answer *We Decide*. It is a different starting point and different orientation. The issue of whether to take demands to the government remains, but it is in the context of a pro-active program of our making. Decisions are in our hands and organizing done from the perspective of advancing our interests — advancing our movements for rights, including our right to govern and decide.

Take for example, possible efforts to support a particular candidate. The old way of doing things would have the candidate present his/her platform, explain why they are the better candidate, likely include why their opponent is bad, and call for support. Commonly the platform presented is vague and general, so what the person concretely plans to do remains largely unknown. Then in organizing the campaign, main aims are not engaging and informing and politicizing the public to defend the public good in an all-round way that takes into account the “big picture.” Instead, it consists of urging individuals to vote for the candidate on the basis of 2-3 generalities, like being for public schools, or for campaign finance reform, etc. Working out what is needed to actually contribute to strengthening the movements of the people for their rights and organizing an election campaign with that as an aim, is completely eliminated.

Building the new means having decision making in our hands. For example, it could include getting people together, teachers, parents, students, professors, community organizers, those active in defending rights, to *decide* the agenda.

For elections, this includes *deciding a campaign platform valid for any candidate*, with specifics added depending on if the race is local, state or federal. It could involve surveys, public meetings, debates, to more broadly engage people in political discussion on a platform with solutions to problems. Candidates would be called on to organize such meetings, so that the people are mobilized to participate in deciding a platform and whether a given candidate can represent it.

Building the new also recognizes that the narrow, limited and often negative character of existing campaigns must be rejected. For example, issues of war and peace are very serious at this time and impact all aspects of life. Yet the anti-war stand of the majority of people is largely absent from campaigns. So are concrete proposals of an anti-war character.

Looking at the issue of education for example, the current pro-war government ensures that more than 50% of the discretionary budget goes to the Pentagon while only about 2-3% goes to education. The regimentation and control imposed by the testing regime, forcing students and teachers alike to submit to activity they know is harmful; the prison-like atmosphere in schools, with their metal detectors, branding students with numbers, 1, 2, 3 or 4, acceptance of collective punishment in the cafeteria forcing everyone to be silent for the actions of a few; and more — are directly related to war preparations, which require a passive and submissive youth and workforce. Further, the attacks on teachers as a profession, elimination of teachers, collective discussion among students and teachers, and replacing them with “computer learning,” are designed to eliminate the human factor — the decisive factor — from education. It is a society geared toward war and destruction that acts to dehumanize human beings.

These are among the reasons that having a broad, overall demand like calling for an *Anti-War Government*

and *Peace Economy* is valid for all campaigns, including those at a state level. For example, Buffalo Public Schools currently pay the military to be in our schools, recruiting and teaching war. The call for an anti-war government could translate into a demand to have an anti-war alternative in the schools, so youth also are armed to oppose war. Another anti-war proposal is that to turn the Niagara Air Force base into a solar farm, providing a pro-peace direction.

There is a place for making demands to government and organizing to pressure officials to meet those demands. Done outside the context of keeping decision making in our hands and keeping our aims of building the new and strengthening our unity and consciousness needed for that, such efforts can be reduced to pressure politics. By fighting instead to build the new, having our own program independent of such demands to government and being pro-active in defending rights, we can lay claim to our right to be decision makers.

