

Key Campus figures react to Trump recognising Jerusalem as capital of Israel

Relevant campus figures respond to Donald Trump's speech recognising Jerusalem as capital of Israel

By [Jacob Phillips](#), Editor (2017/18)

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photo by Haim Zach / GPO

On 6 December US President Donald Trump recognised Jerusalem to be the capital of Israel after the US remaining neutral on the topic for decades. In his speech at the White House the President spoke of his own courage compared to previous presidents in taking a new approach to peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine.

Trump stated "Israel is a sovereign nation...that has the right to determine its own capital." Despite stating in his campaign the US embassy in Israel will be moved from. Trump signed a temporary order to keep the US embassy in Tel Aviv, a renewable six-month waiver that has been signed by every US President for the past two decades. In contrast to this in his speech he stated "The embassy in Jerusalem will be a magnificent tribute to peace."

Opponents to Israel's occupation of Jerusalem has stated that Trumps actions ignore that Israel has occupied East Jerusalem for 50 years, in violation of international law. In response to what actions have taken place. Subsequently, there has been immediate backlash from the Palestinian community. At the time of writing on 8 December clashes have just erupted in the occupied West Bank and over the Israeli-Gaza border. 200 people have been hurt in the initial conflict according to Palestinian medical sources and

one Palestinian death has already been confirmed. Nine of those injured have been hit by rubber coated steel bullets.

In response to Trump's claims Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu labelled the 6 December as a historic day, stating that Israel was profoundly grateful to President Trump. "Jerusalem has been the focus of our hopes, our dreams, our prayers for three millennia," he tweeted.

In contrast, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, spoke in a pre-recorded TV speech stating that the city of Jerusalem was the "eternal capital of the state of Palestine".

There have been many global comments on Trump's speech ranging from celebration to internet trolling. The University of York's community has not been quiet either. Nouse asked those members on campus who the issue impacts dearly for comment on what they think of Trumps actions and what may come:

University of York Politics Academic and Middle East Expert Jacob Eriksson: "Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel was a provocative and potentially destabilizing decision, which has understandably sparked anger among Palestinians and the wider Muslim world. He upended decades of US foreign policy on a sensitive international issue. However, Trump was also recognising reality: although a city divided into West and East along ethnic lines, Israel exercises sovereignty over the city and claims all of it as its capital.

"It is interesting to reflect on what Trump did and did not say. He did not specify West Jerusalem as Israel's capital, or mention East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state, or try to specify where the borders of Jerusalem are - he was very vague. He also said that this decision does not prejudge any final status issues in peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, but that this was up to the parties to decide. It is disingenuous to say that this threatens the peace process - there hasn't been a peace process for years. It does, however, suggest that the US is not interested in setting the parameters of negotiations or a peace deal. If the parties want a two-state solution, then Trump will be happy with that, but this and other statements suggest he is not wedded to that outcome. His peace plan for the 'ultimate deal' remains nowhere to be seen, and if he had been serious about it, he would have linked this announcement to a broader strategy.

"Most Jewish Israelis will be delighted, as their spiritual home has been recognised by the most powerful country in the world as their capital. The right-wing will see Trump's acknowledging of reality as likely to extend to illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Netanyahu will chalk this up as a big political win, and it will be a welcome distraction from his multiple corruption scandals and investigations. The Palestinians are angry and many have taken to the streets in protest, but they always knew that the US was not an honest broker. It was always clear that the US prioritised Israel's interests over those of Palestinians. They are now saying that the US cannot play a part in the negotiations, but if there is a continued initiative from Jared Kushner, they will probably take part in it nonetheless."

Jacob Eriksson specialises in Israeli-Palestinian conflict, conflict resolution, and the wider Arab-Israeli conflict. He has written five books on regarding conflicts in the Middle East.

Chair of the University of York's Jewish Society Tom Jacobs: "Recently, President Trump's unwavering support of Israel, combined with his reputation as being almost impulsive in his actions, has (I believe) bolstered Netanyahu's confidence. Though Jerusalem is culturally, politically, and religiously the most important location in Israel, I feel the decision and its controversy will do nothing but exacerbate, rather than help solve, the ongoing conflicts. Tel Aviv is far more progressive, for example having the largest Pride Parade in the continent. As Israel's city of the future, what better place is there to discuss such an antiquated discourse with the hope of moving forward?"

Chair of the University of York Palestinian Solidarity Society Malaika Magadza: "This move rejects and actively prohibits any chance for a two state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The 1967 annexation of Jerusalem by Israel breaks international law and is not recognised by the international community; the legitimisation of this is in direct defiance of UN resolutions aimed at brokering peace.

“The full colonisation of Jerusalem would severely impact the access of Palestinian Christians and Muslims to holy sites and would incite a new wave of violent instability not only in Palestine but regionally. The quality of life in occupied Palestine is already unacceptable and can only be worsened by a complete takeover of Jerusalem.”

Joeseph Silke Nouse’s Politics Editor: “The Middle East has arguably never been so delicate. President Trump’s decision to officially recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel is sure to cause yet more fractures in the region. It is true that the move is indeed recognition of reality. The ancient Jewish capital has been firmly under Israeli control since the nation repelled Arab aggression and captured it; and one cannot begrudge the celebrations of the Israelis. The status of Jerusalem is a critical focus of the peace process, however, and Trump’s brashness could serve to seriously undermine the prospect of lasting harmony between Israelis and Arabs.”

Israeli, Jewish student Eran Cohen: “Trump’s decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem is a symbol of American support, but it’s nothing new. Obama agreed the biggest ever aid package to Israel (\$38bil) and every American government since 1967 also actively supported Israel. All this does is put another nail in the coffin of the two-state solution, Israel’s best PR argument in diplomacy. Effectively, Trump is saying, “Israel and the Palestinians are here to stay, so either learn to live together in one state or make subjugation part of your identities.””



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