

**JERUSALEM AS THE CAPITAL OF ISRAEL; INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL REPERCUSSIONS ON RELOCATION OF THE UNITED STATES EMBASSY**

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**Abstract:** Middle East retains great strategic, economic, military and political significance in the global order. The region is abounded with energy resources upto two third of the world's total oil production. The area has certain domestic and regional conflicts between the states which has serious implication to the rest of the world. Arab-Israel conflict or Israel-Palestinian conflict is not a new phenomenon. Roots and causes of this skirmishing issue can be traced hundred years back in the famous British agreement titled as The Balford Declaration 1917. However, presently, the world has witnessed the historical and most controversial move of United States embassy to Jerusalem. One of the US president election campaign promise became true after this event, however, the consequences of the same will be illuminated within due course of time. The article aims to sort out the repercussions of recognizing Jerusalem as sole capital of Israel and its impact on US relations with the Muslim world especially Middle East. The study will also investigate the regional and international implications of this diplomatic symbol's relocation. The ultimate purpose of this paper is to provide a neutral overview of a century old dispute in the contemporary changing regional dynamics.

**Keywords:** Middle East, Israel, Palestinian, Jerusalem, US Embassy

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## **Introduction**

The United States 45<sup>th</sup> President Donald J. Trump has proved himself as man of action. He fulfilled a major campaign promise of his and many previous presidential candidates on December 06, 2017 by recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Israel (Iqbal, 2017). The event has been occurred after 70 years of formal recognition of Israel as an independent Jewish state (ibid). "Today, we finally acknowledge the obvious: that Jerusalem is Israel's capital," said President Trump in a speech announcing his intention to construct a U.S. embassy there, reversing U.S. policy that dates back to President Harry Truman (Laub, 2017). Vice-President Mike Pence said "God decided Jerusalem was the capital of Israel more than 3,000 years ago during the time of King David" (Usher, 2018). Albeit, Trump was warned by many in the Middle East and elsewhere of the "disastrous consequences" the move would have on regional stability and any prospect of a long lasting peace agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians (Aljazeera, 2017).

Latterly on December 21, 2017 the United Nations General Assembly declared the U.S recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital city "null and void (Nusca, 2017). It was a humiliating blow for Donald Trump on the world stage, when 128 UNO members voted against his desire and rejected to identify Jerusalem as capital of Israel (Kumar, 2017). The event successfully accomplished despite of being warned by US to cut off aid of the countries backed the resolution. On the day, Mr Rdainah, a spokesman of Palestinian Authority said "We will continue our efforts in the United

Nations and at all international forums to put an end to this occupation, and to establish our Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital," (ibid). It can be recognized as major diplomatic failure of Trump foreign policy.

## **Material and Methods**

Keeping in view the type and nature of study, both qualitative and analytical techniques has been utilized. Moreover, authentic newspapers and online resources were used to produce a quality paper for the readers.

## **Brief History**

Israel-Palestinian conflict has been emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century during World War I when British announced her formal support for establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. The British foreign secretary Arthur James Balfour wrote a letter to the Lionel Walter Rothschild, a figurehead of the British Jewish community on November 2, 1917 (Tahhan, 2017). The text of the letter was "His Majesty's Government view with favour, the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country" (Jewish Virtual Library, nd).

The British Mandate for Palestine was drawn up in 1920 and came into effect on this day September 29, 1923, issued by the League of Nations, the Mandate formalized British rule over parts of the Levant (the region that comprises countries to the east of the Mediterranean), as part of the League's

goal of administrating the region's formerly Ottoman nations "until such time as they are able to stand alone" (Rayman, 2014). In the next two decades British government put hard efforts to facilitate and migrate Jews from all European countries to the Palestine and arises Jewish population there to 27 percent which was 10 percent in 1917. In 1919, US President Woodrow Wilson formulated King Crane Commission to investigate public opinion of the Arab people about mandate system. The commission reported that majority of Arab community of Syria and Palestine expressed strong opposition to Zionism. The late Awni Abd al-Hadi, a Palestinian political figure and nationalist, condemned the Balfour Declaration in his memoirs, saying it was made by an English foreigner who had no claim to Palestine, to a foreign Jew who had no right to it (Tahhan, 2017).

Upon creation of the United Nations Organization, British presented the question of Palestine before the General Assembly. UN Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) was formed to address the issue in April 1947. On November 29, 1947, UN General Assembly adopted UNGA Resolution No 181 in light of UNSCOP recommendations for partition of Palestine into two independent states Israel and Palestine and a special status to Jerusalem (UNGA, 1947). The Jews Agency accepted the plan, however, Palestinian and Arab nations rejected it being against the basics of UN charter. On May 14, 1948, upon relinquishment of Britain mandate, David Ben-Gurion, the head of the Jewish Agency, proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel and U.S. President Harry S. Truman recognized the new nation on

the same day (US Office of The Historian, nd). Several wars on the issue has been fought between the Arab countries and Israel but no solution to the problem exists as yet. Peace negotiations between the two rivalries occurred enormous times but all in vain due the inflatable attitude of Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

### **International and Regional Response on Relocation of US Embassy**

The move of the United States embassy to the Jerusalem has been overserved with grave concern by all key International and regional actors of the Middle East. United Nations Human Rights experts urged Israel to halt all excessive force against Palestinian protesters and called for an "impartial, independent investigation" into troop violence that has left dozens of dead on that day (The Guardian, May 22, 2018). The European Union representative of international affairs, Federica Mogherini, called on Israel to respect the "principle of proportionality in the use of force, with utmost restraint to avoid further loss of life and Israel must respect the right to peaceful protest" (Aljazeera, May 15, 2018). Amnesty International in its report said "The Trump administration may portray this action as simply hauling desks from one building to another. But in reality this move intentionally undermines Palestinian rights and in effect condones decades of violations by Israel, including the creation of illegal settlements, which constitute war crimes" (Amnesty International, May 14, 2018). The Organization of Islamic conference in a joint statement expressed "we strongly rejects and condemns" the White House's "deplorable action" to move the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to

Jerusalem (nzherald, May 15, 2018). Arab league, a 22 members Arab regional alliance, opposed the US relocation of embassy to Jerusalem and called it as grave violation of the International law and blatant attack on the feelings of Arabs and Muslims. The Arab League Chief Ahmed Aboul Gheit stated that "The opening of the American embassy in occupied Jerusalem represents a step of utmost gravity which I do not think the U.S. administration realizes its real consequences in both the short and long-term" (Telesur, May 16, 2018).

Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Geng Shuang alarmed in these words "The question over the status of Jerusalem is complicated and sensitive, all parties should be cautious in order to maintain peace. All parties should avoid shaking the long-term foundations of solving the Palestinian issues and avoid creating new divisions in the region" (South China Morning Post, December 6, 2017), "We disagree with the US decision to move its embassy to Jerusalem and recognize Jerusalem as the Israeli capital before a final status agreement," a spokesman for British Prime Minister Theresa May said (Dawn, May 15, 2018). Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov Said "All countries have expressed grave concern as the situation is becoming increasingly explosive and can detonate any minute. There are casualties already" (Lazaroff, 2018). He further added that "we firmly believe that it is inappropriate to unilaterally revise the decisions of the international community in this way" (Dawn, May 15, 2018). The German Foreign Ministry spokesman said, "The right to peaceful protest must also apply in Gaza, Israel has the right to defend itself and secure its [border]

fence against violent intrusions, but the principle of proportionality applies" (Aljazeera, May 15, 2018)

"America has entered a crisis of strategic decision-making that looks at the international arena immaturely and adventurously," said parliament speaker Ali Larijani, a key establishment figure, at a conference on the Palestinian situation in Tehran (Times of Israel, May 14, 2018). Prince Turki-al-Faisal of Saudi Arabia expressed that "The U.S. decision to shift its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem will make the Middle East a more dangerous place. It's not a step that will bring peace to Palestine or the Middle East" (Chandran, 2018). Turkish presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin expressed his views as "Palestine is not alone. Jerusalem is not alone. Occupation will end and truth and justice will prevail, every Palestinian killed by Israel in the occupied territories today is another dark spot, another crime added to Israel's wall of shame" (Yildirim, 2018). Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri called the US decision provocative, he further added "this decision that is igniting the anger of millions of Arabs, Muslims and Christians" (Bloomberg, May 14, 2018). "We condemned what has happened," the Kuwaiti ambassador to the United Nations, Mansour al-Otaibi, told journalists. He further added "Kuwait has requested an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council on Tuesday, after dozens of Palestinian protesters were killed in violent clashes with Israeli forces on the Gaza border" (Daily Sabah Europe, May 14, 2018). "The government and people of Pakistan stand firmly with the Palestinian people," a statement of Pakistan Foreign Office (Aljazeera, May 15, 2018).

## Conclusion

Upon critical examination of the statements of key stake holders in world politics and global peace efforts the US decision to move its embassy to Jerusalem is an unjustified unilateral action. The repercussion of the event are enormous, first, it will harm the peace negotiations between the Israel and Palestine, second, it will escalate tensions between US and the Islamic world, third, US image will be undermine being a mediator in Israel-Palestine conflict and international peace maintainer, forth, boycott of US and Israel made products will affect the economy of both states adversely, fifth, several precious lives will remain on constant risk until settlement of the dispute, sixth, United Nations role to resolve international disputes amicably will be dissolved, seventh, in case of oil embargo by Middle Eastern producers will enhance energy crises in the entire world, eighth, any regional war between Israel and Arab will be devastating for the whole world. ninth, US will lose heightened diplomatic relationship with the Muslim world, tenth, US foreign policy will be under challenging threats from Asian regional powers (i.e Russia and China).

The problem among the Jewish state and Palestinian Authority will remained unresolved until the both parties reached to a reasonable conclusion. It should be understand by the Palestinian that Jews has the only state in the world (i.e Israel) on the other hand Jews has to accept the mandate of Palestinian Arbs on their lands. Many liberal Jews in the Europe has criticized on Israel unauthorized expansion and settlements within Ghaza Strip and West Bank. However, Israel Government is firmly

supporting its stance to establish colonies for its inhabitants. Israel can be pressurized internationally by boycotting, divesting, educating and non-violent protesting to stop human rights violation in Palestine. Keeping in view the most contradictory status of Jerusalem, it would be under control of UN Trusteeship council as already proposed in 1<sup>st</sup> partition plan of 1948. Arab countries, Iran, Egypt, Jorden, Lebanon and Saudia Arabia and Syria should play a progressive role in the peaceful settlement of the dispute instead of illuminating armed struggle with in the region. Respect of humanity and peace is the ultimate solution of the problem in contemporary regional dynamics.

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