

# Should Jerusalem Be Recognized as Israel's Capital?

There are many different ways to approach what President Donald Trump did in terms of the U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. What follows are some of the major issues that should be addressed by this action.

Was it the right thing to do? The answer is, "Yes," and here is why.

As Jews, we have recognized Jerusalem as both our political and spiritual capital since the time of King David - 3,000 years ago.

Jerusalem is modern Israel's legitimate capital. Jerusalem was established as the capital of Israel 68 years ago on Dec. 13, 1949.

Like every other sovereign state, Israel should have the right to choose its own capital city and to have that choice respected.

All of the governmental agencies are located there. Ambassadors whose embassies are in Tel Aviv regularly travel up to Jerusalem to meet with their Israeli counterparts.

Despite what you might have heard, this recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital should not be seen as questioning or prejudging the outcome of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Any future peace process will need to include establishing two states for two peoples and resolving Palestinian claims to the eastern portion of the city and the disposition of holy places.

Finally, as one who has lots of family in Israel - including my new granddaughter - I too am concerned about the possibility of violent reactions.

It is so disappointing that the Palestinian leadership has called for violent "days of rage" in response to this announcement.

But consider this: Earlier this year, [UNESCO declared that there is no Jewish connection to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem](#). Can one imagine that in response

to this declaration, the Israeli government would have called for a violent “day of rage?” I think not.

It is shocking that much of the world seems to expect and normalize violent acts of terrorism in response to this decision and seems to be willing to be held hostage by such threats.

Was this a “good” time to take this action?

During the Holocaust, some Jews refused to flee from Europe because the “Messiah had not come.” The time was not a “good” time.

In the spring of 1948, 70 years ago, officials from the U.S. State Department came to then Prime Minister of Israel David Ben Gurion and urged him not to declare independence.

They told him that he would be bringing a second holocaust upon the Jewish people, as those living in the land of Israel would be massacred by attacking Arab armies.

His response, on May 5, 1948, was to declare the independence of the state of Israel. Ben Gurion realized that, in the eyes of others, there would never be a “good” time.

Similarly, people, who say this recognition by the U.S. should only come after a comprehensive peace settlement, fail to realize how long Israel has been attempting to achieve peace with her neighbors and how many times her peace overtures have been rebuffed by rejectionists.

In 1947, the United Nations recommended a two-state solution: a Jewish state and a Palestinian Arab state. The Jews accepted this recommendation, but the Arab states rejected it and the very idea of a Jewish state.

In 2000, Israel unilaterally withdrew from Southern Lebanon. In 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza. In each case, withdrawal was not met with peace, but by increased terrorism and violence.

In recent years, various diplomatic initiatives have been promoted to implement the two-state solution, including an offer of a two-state solution in 2000, which was rejected by Arafat, and one in 2008, which included recognition of Jerusalem

as the Palestinian capital.

In addition to war, Arab rejectionists have used economic boycotts, diplomatic pressure, exclusion from regional groupings - for example, in the U.N., legal actions in world courts (law-fare), and propaganda against Israel to fight and delegitimize Israel. None of these efforts has achieved peace.

In light of this, it is proper to ask how much longer should it have been reasonable for the United States to wait to acknowledge Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Was this a "good" time to take this action? Perhaps the answer is, "Will there ever be a "good" time to do what is just?" Perhaps, the messiah will have to come (or come back, if one is Christian) first!

Trump is disliked so much by most liberals and liberal Jews that there is a feeling that he is incapable of doing anything right. He is seen by many as being self-serving and corrupt.

And yet, as the old aphorism teaches us, even a clock that has ceased to tell time is correct twice a day.

The danger here for the U.S. Jewish community is that this type of thinking will only make support for Israel less bipartisan.

Yes, one can question the president's motives. One can certainly ask whether there is any overall strategy reflected in this move.

But the bottom line is that recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital was justified for the U.S. and was an act that corrected a 68-year-old historical injustice.

In the short term, the next two weeks will be critical. It is my hope that those advocating violence will not succeed and that direct peace talks will be renewed.

The age-old yearning for Jerusalem has always been intertwined with the yearning for peace.

These two dreams - the dream of Jerusalem and the dream of peace - enhance one another. The very name of the city has the root word for peace, and peace is one of the city's many names.

The Jewish concept of a messianic time is a peaceful and restored Jerusalem: "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age. And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets'" (Zachariah 8:4-5).

More than 2,000 years ago, the psalmist wrote, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: 'May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.' For the sake of my family and friends, I will say, 'Peace be within you'" (Psalm 122:6-8).

The words of the psalmist are as true today as they were then, and our prayers as Jews are for a day when all in Israel and Palestine will live in peace and security.

*[Fred Guttman](#) is rabbi of Temple Emanuel in Greensboro, North Carolina.*

*Editor's note: A column by Yohanna Katanacho, an Evangelical Palestinian Christian, opposing the embassy decision is available [here](#).*