

Draft Dodger in Chief Dodges “Historic” Opening of US Embassy, Jerusalem

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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It was NBC's Cal Parry who summed up the obscenity of Donald Trump's ignorant and igniting decision to move the US Embassy to West Jerusalem, then to celebrate the inauguration on Monday, 14th May: "Well dressed American and Israeli officials on one side of the screen: desperation, death and fires on the other."

In 1948, 700,000 Palestinians began their flight from the city and the region trying to escape the massacres by Jewish militias on that date, seventy years ago. Commemorated ever since as the day of “Nakba” – disaster, catastrophe, cataclysm – following them to this day as land is stolen, families expelled and “settlements” encroach, and Palestinian history is bulldozed.

‘ “When the massacre started the (paramilitaries) took a kid and strapped him on an army jeep and drove him around different neighbourhoods of Jerusalem, saying ‘the same will happen to you if you don’t leave,’ ” Abu Kaya said, retelling his grandfather’s story to Middle East Eye.’ (1)

“ ... not a single country currently has its embassy in Jerusalem because such a move is widely considered to violate international law.”

Further:

‘Under United Nations Resolution 181, which in 1947 set out the conditions for the partition of Palestine into an “Arab State” and a “Jewish State”, Jerusalem was to be administered by the UN under a “special international regime.”

‘The 1949 armistice agreement that formally ended the first Arab-Israeli war divided the city along the “Green Line” into Israeli-controlled western areas, and Jordanian-held East Jerusalem, which included the Old City.’

“Israel’s occupation of East Jerusalem and the West Bank since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war is widely recognised as illegal and violates further United Nations resolutions.

“For Palestinians then, sovereignty over the city is not something for leaders of other countries to determine, as US President Donald Trump did when he announced the embassy move in December.”

In the few minutes it took to jot down notes for this piece, the Palestinian death toll of those demonstrating rose from twenty eight dead, shot by Israeli

soldiers, to forty three. The injured rose from 1,693 to “near two thousand.”

Fadi Abo Salah, 30, who lost both legs in a bombing by Israeli aircraft, was one who lost his life, in his wheel chair – targeted by an Israeli sniper – in front of his wife and three small children. (Palestine Live group.)

Israel, frequently declaring itself “the only democracy in the Middle East”, carried out a very democratic slaughter and target practice. Young, old, disabled, male, female, all were equally entitled to be shot, sniped at, tear gassed.

Tiny Laila al-Ghandour who died from teargas inhalation was just eight months old. (Guardian, 15th May 2018.)

Journalist Sharif Kouddos recorded:

“Wails of grief inside family home of Laila al-Ghandour, 8-month old who died of gas inhalation yesterday. Her aunt says the gas came from everywhere, including drones.”

By Monday’s end he Tweeted:

Casualty toll from today in Gaza now stands at 55 dead, including 6 minors. 2,770 wounded, including 225 children. Of the wounded over 1,350 were hit with live ammunition, according to Ministry of Health.

— Sharif Kouddous (@sharifkouddous) [May 14, 2018](#)

“It is unbearable to witness such a massive number of unarmed people being shot in such a short time,” stated Médecins Sans Frontières.

As the Embassy partied and visitors “clapped and cheered”, Gaza’s hospitals, already teetering on collapse resulting from restrictions on all coming in to the besieged Strip – including electricity, with water contaminated – had surgeons operating day and night, with the injured being treated in the hospital car parks even, due to the overwhelming influx of those targeted.

In another world, just sixty miles away: ‘Washington’s Ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, stood on a stage painted with the US flag and said:

“Today’s historic event is attributed to the vision, courage and moral clarity of one person to whom we owe an enormous and eternal debt of gratitude: President Donald J Trump.”

The crowd cheered and gave a standing ovation.’ (Guardian, 15th May 2018.)

Deaths had risen to fifty nine.

Of the eighty six Ambassadors to Israel, only thirty two attended the ceremony, with fifty four boycotting and only four EU Member countries attending. (2)

Moreover:

“The Haaretz newspaper reported that most EU member States did not participate in the ceremony because they have a firm policy towards the transfer of the US Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. It said that the ambassadors of Russia, Egypt, India, Japan and Mexico also did not attend the celebration.”

Fallout has been swift. French President Emmanuel Macron in a telephone call to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and to Jordan’s King Abdullah condemned the “violence of the Israeli armed forces ...” and again criticized the moving of the Embassy.

King Abdullah, of course, has custodianship of all Jerusalem’s Holy Sites and: ‘has the right to exert all legal efforts to safeguard them, especially Al Aqsa Mosque, which is defined as “The Entirety of Al Haram Al Sharif.” ‘ (3) As far as can be ascertained thus far, it seems that this important, indeed unique, historic custodianship was neither discussed with the King or his representatives, nor even a consideration of the Trump Administration as they bulldozed their way through diplomacy, history and all norms in their Jerusalem settlement.

NATO ally President Erdogan of Turkey has recalled his Ambassadors to Israel and the US.

South Africa recalled their Ambassador to Israel, with immediate effect, as the Embassy celebrations were ongoing.

Ireland has summoned Israel’s Ambassador to protest Israeli violence.

Kuwait moved for an emergency meeting of the UN, which was blocked by the US. A ‘draft statement included language expressing “outrage and sorrow at the killing of Palestinian civilians exercising their right to peaceful protest.” ‘

‘It also reaffirmed UN resolutions on the status of Jerusalem, saying that recent events had “no legal effect” under international law. The statement was withdrawn once the US indicate that it would block it, a UN diplomat said.’ (CNN, 15th May 2018.)

Qatar condemned “a massacre” and “savage killings.”

Germany, somewhat weakly, expressed concern at the massacre saying:

“The right to peaceful protest must also apply in Gaza”, via a Foreign Ministry spokeswoman

In the UK, the Labour Party’s Shadow Foreign Secretary, Emily Thornberry in an unusually unequivocal statement said:

“We condemn unreservedly the Israeli government for their brutal, lethal and

utterly unjustified actions on the Gaza border, and our thoughts are with all those Palestinians in Gaza whose loved ones have been lied or injured as a result.

“These actions are made all the worse because they come not as the result of a disproportionate over-reaction to one day’s protests, but as the culmination of six weeks of an apparently systemic and deliberate policy of killing and maiming unarmed protestors and bystanders who pose no threat to the forces at the Gaza border, many of them shot in the back, many of them shot hundreds of metres from the border, and many of them children.

“Throughout that six-week period, the UN’s Secretary General has been calling for an independent investigation into these incidents, one that should urgently determine whether international law has been broken, and hold the Netanyahu government to account for their actions. The UK should lead calls for the UN Security Council to order such an investigation today.

“These incidents must also be the catalyst for urgent and concerted international pressure on the Netanyahu government to lift the blockade on Gaza, and end Israel’s illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories. No longer can Netanyahu act as a law unto himself, under the protection of the Trump administration, whose decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem today has further inflamed the situation.”

Chile, with the largest population of Palestinians outside the Arab world, raised Palestinian flags outside the main entrance of the Presidential Palace of La Moneda.

Sacha Sergio Llorenty Soliz, Bolivia’s UN Ambassador, read the names of the Gaza massacre victims at the UN session, wearing a Palestinian keffiyeh.

The mayor of Barcelona Ada Colau has demanded an arms embargo on Israel, demanding backing of Amnesty International’s call for a global arms embargo on Israel. Amnesty has condemned:

“ ... an abhorrent violation of International Law and human rights. “

Zeid bin Ra’ad al-Husseini, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stated:

“Those responsible for outrageous human rights violations must be held to account.”

Writer, broadcaster and academic, Kenan Malik Tweeted:

Mark Regev, Israeli ambassador to the UK, considers the shooting dead of 58 Palestinians and the wounding of 2700 as 'measured' and 'surgical'. I'd hate to know what is his definition of 'unmeasured' or 'non-surgical'.

— Kenan Malik (@kenanmalik) [May 15, 2018](#)

The death toll became sixty.

From the Trumposphere, Donald Trump input:

Big day for Israel. Congratulations!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [May 14, 2018](#)

However, on this day of diplomatic vandalism – which the US State Department flagged as a “historic move” – the five times Draft Dodger in Chief it seems reverted to type. The man to whom limelight is seemingly indispensable, stayed in Washington and addressed the Embassy gathering by video, from a safe 5,897 miles away, dodging any potential conflict, demonstrations, dissent. Trump of course, pulled out of a visit to London in February, to open the new US Embassy, which has also relocated, reportedly for fear of the massive protests planned at his stay.

The man who can menace Iran, threaten North Korea with: “ ... fire and fury and frankly the power the likes of which like this world has never seen”, cowers from peaceful protesters with placards. No wonder he had no intention of showing up in Jerusalem, even as guest of honour, surrounded by steel rings of security, in a region destabilized by the US and “allies” for decades, with the unarmed, indigenous population simply demanding some justice sixty miles away.

Donald Trump, it seems, talks the talk but can’t walk the walk. Perhaps someone also told him Armageddon is in Israel (site now named Megiddo.)

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Notes

1. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/our-land-us-embassy-move-riles-palestinian-refugees-west-jerusalem-2027680826>
2. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180515-54-ambassadors-boycott-israeli-american-embassy-celebration/>
3. <https://kingabdullah.jo/en/page/the-hashemites/custodianship-over-holy-sites>

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