

French Ambassador Says Trump “Deal of the Century” Is DOA, Calls Israel ‘Apartheid State’

By [Whitney Webb](#)

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“[Kushner] is so rational, and he is so pro-Israeli also, that he may neglect the point that if you offer the Palestinians the choice between surrendering and committing suicide, they may decide the latter. Somebody like Kushner doesn’t understand that.” — French Ambassador Gerard Araud

In [an interview](#) with the *Atlantic* last Friday, outgoing French Ambassador to the United States Gerard Araud made headlines after emphatically stating that Israel is already “an apartheid state” and that the Trump administration’s so-called “Deal of the Century” aimed at resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict is “99 percent doomed.”

Araud — whose first government post was in France’s Tel Aviv embassy, and who was the French ambassador to Israel from 2003 to 2006 — [made the claim](#) after being asked about his views on the Israel-Palestine “peace process.” After stating that he enjoys a “close” relationship with Jared Kushner — Trump’s son-in-law who has spent the last two years drafting a “peace plan” for the Trump administration — Araud noted that Kushner’s “proposal is very close to what the Israelis want.”

This outcome has [long been noted](#) by many media outlets based on Kushner’s close ties to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu; [his family’s role](#) in funding illegal West Bank settlements; and, more recently, statements made by those familiar with the negotiations and the fact that the Palestinians have refused to negotiate with Kushner’s team since the Trump administration decreed Jerusalem to be Israel’s capital in December 2017.

“Smart, no guts”

Araud, who first became France’s ambassador to the U.S. in 2014, later described Kushner as “extremely smart, but he has no guts. He doesn’t know the history.” While Araud posited that there may be an advantage to not knowing the history of the conflict, he also noted that it was a double-edged sword, stating:

[Kushner] is so rational, and he is so pro-Israeli also, that he may neglect the point that if you offer the Palestinians the choice between surrendering and committing suicide, they may decide the latter. Somebody like Kushner doesn’t understand that.”

Like other politicians who have recently spoken about the “peace plan,” Araud has not seen

the plan but was told that it was around 50 pages and very “precise.” Yet, drawing on his closeness to Kushner, Araud [stated that](#) the plan had been created based on three assumptions or “bets” made by Kushner, the first of which was that Trump would be “uniquely able to push the Israelis, because he is so popular in Israel.” The second bet, according to Araud, was that “the Palestinians may consider it’s their last chance to get limited sovereignty,” while the third element of the plan is “Kushner is going to pour money on the Palestinians.”

Despite the fact that Araud clearly likes Kushner and parts of his approach, he said that the plan was almost guaranteed to fail: “Is it doomed to fail? I should say 99 percent yes, but 1 percent, you never forget the 1 percent.”

Araud also raised the point that Israel’s government, despite all the concessions it has received from the Trump administration, would be uninterested in making any concessions, no matter how minor, as part of Kushner’s “peace plan:”

The problem is that the disproportion of power is such between the two sides that the strongest may conclude that they have no interest to make concessions... The status quo is extremely comfortable for Israel. Because they [can] have the cake and eat it.”

Araud summarized the status quo as follows:

They [Israel] have the West Bank, but at the same time they don’t have to make the painful decision about the Palestinians, really making them really, totally stateless or making them citizens of Israel.”

With Israel’s annexation of the West Bank looming following Netanyahu’s recent re-election, Araud further noted:

They [Israel] won’t make them [Palestinians] citizens of Israel. So they will have to make it official, which is we know the situation, which is an apartheid [sic]. There will be officially an apartheid state. They are in fact already.”

Israeli apartheid: recognition brings resistance

Araud’s statement that Israel is “in fact already” an apartheid state is not surprising, in the sense that Israeli apartheid has long been a reality on the ground in occupied Palestine. However, it is remarkable, in the sense that Araud’s statements show that the reality is now near impossible to cover up or ignore and also that the reality of the situation is receiving more recognition than ever from the mainstream.

Indeed, if Araud — a former French ambassador to Israel who is close to Kushner and a well-entrenched figure of the Western political elite — is able to make such statements without being accused of “anti-Semitism,” it definitively shows that Israel’s status as an apartheid state is quickly becoming an accepted truth in mainstream, Western political discourse.

While Araud has been characterized for his “bluntness” in the past and as “direct to the point of discomfort,” his status as a member of the Western political elite that has long

shielded Israeli apartheid and decades-long ethnic cleansing of Palestine from scrutiny highlights the dramatic yet unambiguous nature of the situation.

As mainstream recognition of Israeli apartheid accelerates, so too will efforts to resist it, particularly among countries and political groups that have opposed apartheid in other places around the world, like South Africa. Such pushback for those who reject apartheid systems wherever they may occur appears to be a “bet” that Jared Kushner failed to consider when drafting his “peace plan.”

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Whitney Webb is a MintPress News journalist based in Chile. She has contributed to several independent media outlets including Global Research, EcoWatch, the Ron Paul Institute and 21st Century Wire, among others. She has made several radio and television appearances and is the 2019 winner of the Serena Shim Award for Uncompromised Integrity in Journalism.

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