

Jordan on Edge Ahead of Unveiling of Trump's "Peace Plan" for Palestine

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President Donald Trump's special envoy to the Middle East, Jason Greenblatt, tweeted last week that

"rumours that our peace vision includes a confederation between Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Authority, or that the vision contemplates making Jordan the homeland for Palestinians, are incorrect".

His response comes in the wake of repeated warnings by His Majesty King Abdullah that he will never relent over the Hashemite Custodianship of Muslim and Christian holy places in Jerusalem, while rejecting plans to settle Palestinian refugees and turn Jordan into an alternative homeland.

The King's unwavering stand on these three issues is in the crux of his long-standing position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; that the only path towards a just and lasting solution lies in a negotiated settlement based on the two-state formula, leading to the creation of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. But this is not Jordan's position only. It is the position of all Arab countries, as underlined in the Arab League's resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, the EU through its declarations and the international community through UN resolutions over many years. Until 2016, it was also the position of the United States.

But now we have a White House team, whose impartiality is in doubt, which, while revealing very little about the proposed regional plan, has been the driving force behind a number of unilateral steps taken by President Donald Trump's administration in recent years. These steps, which include the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the attempt to defund UNRWA, the closure of the Palestine Liberation Organisation's office in Washington and the suspension of USAID projects in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, all point to one goal: the dismantling of the main components of the Palestinian issue.

These components, once referred to as final-status issues, include Jerusalem, settlements, borders, refugees and statehood. King Abdullah's firm stand against what the Trump administration is working on is not only warranted but needed as he raises red flags and issues warnings of the repercussions on regional stability if the plan is allowed to pass.

Greenblatt's Tweet does little to mollify Jordanians. He says that there are no plans to turn Jordan into an alternative homeland for the Palestinians, neither Jordanians nor Palestinians will allow that to happen, but he ignores other issues, such as the settling of Palestinian

refugees in host countries, the fate of Jerusalem and a possible future role for Jordan in administering what remains of the West Bank after the annexation of Jewish settlements and others areas.

Greenblatt, who has been tweeting about other issues as well, has little understanding, or sympathy, for Palestinian suffering and sacrifice under decades of illegal occupation. Neither does Jared Kushner, who heads the White House team, nor David Friedman, US ambassador in Israel.

What is especially dangerous in Trump's peace plan is that it ignores the traditional legal benchmarks required for a just and lasting peace, whether UN resolutions on the conflict, the Oslo Accords and latter agreements. It attempts to legitimise what is and has always been an illegal occupation of Palestinian land. We have already seen this in the outrageous and unilateral recognition by Trump of the occupied Golan Heights as Israeli territory.

Such a precedent, whether in the West Bank or Golan Heights, throws all international conventions, resolutions and agreements out of the window. What Trump and his aides fail to recognise is even if they impose what would be fait accompli on the Palestinians, the region as a whole will not accept such an anomaly. It will not only polarise the international community, but most importantly, it will unleash waves of violence in the occupied territories.

For Jordan, it does not matter what Greenblatt says in his Tweets. The Trump plan, which is synchronised with Israel's far right agenda, will have a domino effect that will end up hurting Israel, the Palestinians and countries that have a stake in the fate of the peace process like Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and beyond.

King Abdullah, who has been increasingly vociferous in his opposition of any deviation from the path of the two-state formula, understands the dangerous reverberations of Trump's plan on Jordan and the region as a whole. Furthermore, he refuses to tie the liquidation of the Palestinian cause to other regional challenges. And he knows that standing against Trump's plan will come at a cost. This is why it is important for other Arab leaders to come forward as well.

Apart from the Palestinians, Jordan stands to lose the most if Trump's plan goes through. This is why the King has been mobilising Jordanians to express their support for his position and reject any solution that would deny Palestinians their legitimate right. Few weeks separate us from "the ultimate deal" and the region should get ready for a tense phase that would put pressure on every Arab leadership and may lead to a diplomatic face-off with Washington.

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