

# UN Vote: Middle East Christians Blast US Decision on Jerusalem

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

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

*Featured image: Palestinians burn picture of U.S. Vice President Mike Pence during a protest against Trump decision to announce Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and "pilgrimage" of Pence to Bethlehem.*

*Twice in one week, the United Nations slapped the Trump Administration in the face in voting by a huge majority to reject the US [unilateral recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital](#). In specially called sessions, the Security Council voted 14-1 and the General Assembly 128-9 to censor the U.S. decision as violations of international law and UN resolutions..*

The two UN votes were also collective acts of defiance against Washington's bullying of member nations. U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley stated that the U.S. would "take down names" and cut U.S. funds to governments that voted against the U.S.. Haley went so far as to send [threatening letters](#) to most of the UN members stating that the "President and the U.S. take this vote personally."

Tump [echoed his ambassador](#), crassly adding,

"Let them vote against us. We'll save a lot. We don't care."

Meanwhile, mass anger in the Middle East has forced Vice President Mike Pence to cancel a planned "Christmas Pilgrimage" where this evangelical rightwinger had hoped to create divisions between Muslims and Christians. Instead, unprecedented numbers of Christian leaders in the area have come forward to denounce Washington's decision.

Pence's picture was burned and stomped in Bethlehem's Manger Square, a town traditionally associated with Christianity. One by one, Palestine Authority head Mahmoud Abbas and then the region's Christian leaders publically canceled their meeting with Pence, excoriating the U.S. and declaring solidarity with Palestine. Approximately 20 percent of the Palestinian people are Christian, and Arab Christians are an integral part of the region.

Democrats also support Jerusalem as Israel's capital

On Dec. 6, Trump announced that the United States was the first country to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. This was a frontal attack on the rights of the oppressed Palestinian people and a gift to the racist, apartheid government of Israel, whose aim is to colonize all of Palestine and drive out as much of the indigenous Palestinian population as

possible.

It is also a gross violation of international law and defies the many international bodies that regard the 1980 Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem as illegal. The West Bank, Gaza, Syria's Golan Heights and East Jerusalem were seized by Israel using U.S.-supplied arms in the 1967 Six Day War.

While it is not on the front pages, it was not just a Republican endeavor. The Democratic Party leadership in the U.S. Senate [also supported Trumps announcement](#). On Dec 5, Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, the Senate's top Democrat, said that he had advised Trump to declare Jerusalem as Israel's "undivided" capital. Maryland Senator Ben Cardin, the ranking Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, reiterated his support for recognizing Jerusalem on Dec. 4.

Meanwhile, this has also been the position of Hillary Rodham Clinton for many years. In 1999, when running for New York Senator, [she called for Jerusalem](#) to be the "eternal and indivisible capital of Israel" and pledged to move the U.S. embassy there.

Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders limited himself to a five-line statement of "concern."

Even abstaining countries denounce Trump from podium

The General Assembly resolution called Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital "null and void." It reaffirmed 50 years of Security Council resolutions that opposed Israel declaring full sovereignty over Jerusalem. These resolutions included requirements that the city's final status must be decided in direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. The resolution "demands that all states comply with Security Council resolutions regarding Jerusalem, and not to recognize any actions or measures contrary to those resolutions."



Solidarity protest in Jakarta.

Only nine states – including the United States and Israel –voted against the resolution. The other countries were the tiny, vulnerable nations of Togo, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Marshall Islands, and the rightwing regimes in Guatemala and Honduras. While 35 countries abstained due to U.S. pressure, even ambassadors from abstaining countries, including Mexico, used their time on the podium to criticize the Trump administration's decision.

On Dec. 18, an identical resolution in the Security Council, passed 14-1, but was then vetoed by the U.S., the only government opposing it.

US never an impartial mediator, covered for Israeli aggression

Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims, and concerned individuals organizations and governments have responded to Washington's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital with denunciations and protests. Demonstrations have taken place across the globe, including many in the US.

On Dec. 13, in Istanbul, the 57 member Organization of Islamic Cooperation [said](#) it considered the U.S. action legally null and would hold Washington responsible for any consequences. Speaking there, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas said,

"We will no longer accept that [the U.S.] has a role in the political process," and canceled a meeting with U.S. Vice President Mike Pence.

Many in the Palestinian struggle and progressives around the world feel that the U.S. has never been an impartial mediator, instead serving as a cover for Israeli aggression and land theft. Since the 1993 Oslo Accords, every U.S. administration, Republican and Democrat, has mediated Palestinian-Israeli talks on implementing a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. In that time Israel has seized control of 60 percent of the West Bank. Some 2.6 million Palestinians are being squeezed into ever-smaller spaces, making a contiguous viable Palestinian state impossible, with a map of the borders where Palestinians still maintain some control looking like Swiss cheese. While UN resolutions have denounced settlements, today some 600,000 Jewish Israelis live in government-subsidized settlements there—1 out of 10 Israelis. The Palestinian population is constantly harassed by Israeli soldiers, 40 percent of the men on the West Bank have been arrested, and 99 percent of Palestinian cases in Israel's military court end in convictions.

Israel used its U.S-supplied arsenal for massive bombardments of Gaza in 2008-9 and 2014, targeting homes and hospitals. Gaza's 1.8 million people, without water or natural resources, have been embargoed and blockaded since 2007, denied essential medicine and construction materials to re-build homes. Its population is held prisoner, unable to leave.

All this happened while the US was "mediating."

Arab Christian leaders denounce Pence

Meanwhile Pence, an evangelical Christian, had planned a "Christmas pilgrimage" to Palestine this month to drive a wedge between Middle Eastern Christians and their Muslim neighbors. But this has badly backfired, as these Christian leaders have canceled their meetings with Pence and [roundly denounced him](#).

In Bethlehem, where the Abbas-Pence meeting was to take place, a banners now hanger on Manger Square near the Church of the Nativity reading, "Bethlehem refuses US vice president's visit." On Dec. 17, protesters burned and stomped on photos of Pence and his chief negotiator, Jason Greenblatt, in that town's Manger Square.

Rev. Boules Haliem, spokesman for Pope Tawadros II, the Coptic patriarch of Egypt, said,

"The pope will simply not sit down with anyone so long as this is the American position...." "We will always stand with the people of Palestine."

In Jerusalem the patriarch and leaders of 13 Christian churches said in a Christmas message that Trump's decision "tramples on the mechanism that has maintained peace throughout the ages," and warned it "will lead to a dark reality."

On Dec. 13, in Amman, Jordan, Christian leaders organized a candlelight vigil of 2,000 to protest Washington's decision

The highest Christian authority in Lebanon, Maronite Patriarch Beshara Al-Rai, [denounced](#) Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital because

"It violates international legitimacy resolutions, defies international and regional will, and is a slap in the face of the Palestinians, Levantine Christians, Muslims and all the Arabs"... He called on Trump to "reverse this destructive decision."

In a [highly unusual move](#), Al-Rai gathered Catholic and Orthodox patriarchs and representatives, as well as leaders of the nation's Protestant churches and Sunni, Shiite and Druze communities in an Interreligious Summit in Lebanon to discuss the Trump announcement. A Dec. 14 joint statement stressed that Jerusalem "has a privileged position in the consciences of believers of these faiths," and that

"The U.S. president's decision, based on special political calculations, is a challenge and a provocation for more than 3 billion people and touches on the depth of their faith," the statement said.

Father Jamal Khader, the Catholic parish priest of the West Bank Palestinian city of Ramallah, summed it up when he said,

"To declare Jerualem as the capital based on some biblical argument is a dangerous thing."

Trump is "wanting to separate Christians from the rest of the community. But we are part of the community. ...I don't agree with an ideology that looks at Christians as Westerners, or wants us to side against Muslims," Father Khader added. "No—we lived together for 1,400 years, and we can live with them now."

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