

# Yes, Jerusalem is Israel's Capital

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Among other impending catastrophes, the punditry is up in arms over reports that the Trump Administration is planning to move the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and officially recognize the City as Israel's capital. David Friedman, who Trump named as his nominee for ambassador, has spoken directly about this intention. In its entirely predictable editorial denouncing this plan, the *New York Times* declared that moving the embassy from Tel Aviv where it has been "for 68 years, along with the embassies of most other countries", is evidence of "Mr. Friedman's apparent zeal for confrontation." The problem, however, is not what Trump might or might not do, but 68 years of absurdity in pretending that Jerusalem is not our capital. In practice, the leaders of every country in the world come to Jerusalem to speak to the Prime Minister and members of the government. Every diplomat, including the ambassadors from Jordan and Egypt, presents his or her credentials to the President in Jerusalem, and they frequent the Knesset like diplomats based in the US visit Congress.

The fiction that Jerusalem is not the capital, but a sort of no-man's land, took hold in the context of the UN Partition plan which was adopted by the General Assembly on November 29, 1947, and promptly (as well as violently) rejected by the Arabs. Under the 1947 plan, Jerusalem was supposed to be a "corpus separatum" (Latin for "separated body") – a vaguely defined and unworkable international zone belonging neither to the Jewish or Arab state. When partition collapsed with the Arab war to erase Israel, and the borders were redrawn in the ensuing war, Jerusalem was divided

between the Jordanian forces which occupied the eastern portions, and Israel, which took control of the west.

At this point, the “corpus separatum” concept should have been forgotten, along with the boundaries and other details of Partition. Instead, this unique and absurd anachronism has lingered for 68 years. Initially, the Americans and Europeans took the Arab commitments to negotiating peace agreements with the Jewish state seriously, and hoped that this would allow for international control of Jerusalem, which was important to the Vatican and other Christian bodies. Later, as this illusion faded, countries feared recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital would unleash a massive wave of Arab anger (particularly from Saudi Arabia and the other oil producers) and Islamist terror.

This fear continued after 1967, when Israel reunited the two halves of the City, through the 1973 Arab oil boycott and the wave of PLO terror attacks in Europe, and until today, despite all of the changes in the region and the world. As a result, births that are recorded and passports that are issued by the American consulate in Jerusalem do not include the word “Israel”, propagating the fiction that the city is in fact a “corpus separatum”.

After almost 70 years of absurdity, it is clear that a new in policy is long overdue.