



Keep Jerusalem United as the Capital of the State of Israel

June 2017

Your Excellencies,

June 2017 marks the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem during the Six Day War in 1967. Since June 1967, the State of Israel has extended Israeli law, jurisdiction and administration over the wider municipality of Jerusalem, including what is today often referred to as East Jerusalem.

It is of fundamental importance for the international community to support the current status quo today, as this provides the best model for protecting the interests of not only all Israelis living in East Jerusalem, but also of all Arab Palestinians living in the region.

There are six main reasons why the continued application of Israeli law, jurisdiction, and administration to the whole Municipality of Jerusalem should be defended, while supporting efforts to improve the living conditions of all residents of East Jerusalem:

1. **Recognition of Jewish connection with the Old City of Jerusalem.** The Jewish people have a uniquely deep and unbroken connection with the Old City of Jerusalem that goes back over 3000 years. This is not to the exclusion of the connection between other peoples and the City of Jerusalem. While Arab Palestinians also have a historical connection and should also be allowed to live in Jerusalem, agreement to any proposal that denies the rights of Jewish people to live in all of Jerusalem (just as Arabs are allowed to live in West Jerusalem) would be a fundamental denial of historical facts and a breach of western values and fundamental freedoms.
2. **Territorial sovereignty and Israel's borders.** In the 1920s, the international community guaranteed the Jewish people a safe homeland in Palestine. This recognition of the right of the Jewish people to self-determination in Palestine was reflected in the San Remo Resolution and the Mandate for Palestine, pursuant to which Israel has valid claims to territorial sovereignty over all of Jerusalem and the "West Bank". Recognition of a unilaterally declared Palestinian state on the basis of the 1949 Armistice Lines would violate these legal rights of the Jewish people with respect to Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria under international law. The so-called "1967 borders" are simply the 1949 Armistice Lines. There is no legal or historical justification for adopting these cease-fire lines as the basis for determining Israel's borders with a new state of Palestine.

3. **Negotiations.** Recognizing a unilaterally declared Palestinian state with “East Jerusalem” as its capital would conflict with UN Security Council Resolution 242 and greatly undermine the existing framework of agreements since 1967 - including the Oslo Accords - which are based on the principles of mutual recognition, negotiations to settle all final status issues (including the status of Jerusalem), the definition of safe and secure borders, and the resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem.
4. **Security.** Like every other nation state, Israel has a right to secure borders, territorial integrity, and freedom from threats of aggression. There is a strong likelihood that radical Islamic groups would have a major influence within, or even control, a new Palestinian state. Their stated objective is to remove Jews from their territories and even to eliminate the Jewish State. If Hamas, ISIS, or their allies are effectively given the right to attack the Jewish people from East Jerusalem, Israel’s very existence will be under threat.
5. **Freedom of worship for all religions.** Jerusalem must remain open for people of all faiths. History shows that Jewish control of Jerusalem provides the best possible guarantee that the Old City and the Holy Places will be protected. Jews and Christians should have a right to worship at the Western Wall and the Temple Mount. The Old City was completely closed for Jewish worshippers during the Jordanian occupation from 1948-1967, and many synagogues were destroyed and desecrated. Christians and Jews are being ethnically cleansed from most of the Middle East, and Christian and Jewish holy places are being destroyed. The same would likely happen if the part of Jerusalem were to fall under the control of an Islamic state of Palestine.
6. **Services to the residents of East Jerusalem.** Division of the city will not improve the well-being of the residents of East Jerusalem. Under Israeli administration, there is a high level of integration between West and East Jerusalem's residents – Jewish and Arab - in day-to-day life, and the Municipality of Jerusalem works in close cooperation with local Arab and Jewish leadership in East Jerusalem in promoting the quality of life of all East Jerusalem residents. All East Jerusalem residents benefit from the many economies of scale and scope provided by the management of the united city, such as those provided by municipal-wide water, electricity, and telecommunications infrastructures. According to an independent poll conducted by the Washington Institute in 2015, 52% of Arab Palestinians living in East Jerusalem stated they would prefer to be citizens of Israel with equal rights, rather than citizens of a Palestinian state.

The way forward to peace is through mutual acceptance, bilateral agreements, and genuine cooperation, not through one-sided unilateral measures.

We call on the international community to embrace these principles and ensure that Jerusalem remains undivided for the benefit of all people.

Yours sincerely,