



Policy Brief
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The issue of East Jerusalem

Following President Trump's internationally rejected decision on the status of Jerusalem last year, we have been forced once again to confront and analyze this particularly contentious dimension of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

UN Security Council resolutions

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has maintained its position by using relevant UN resolutions (and international law more broadly) as impartial reference points. Both resolutions 476 and 478 were issued by the UN Security Council following Israel's declaration in 1980 of its formal annexation of East Jerusalem, thus claiming the entire city as the Jewish state's 'eternal and undivided capital'. Successive rounds of peace-process negotiations that followed this annexation have been characterized by Israel's intransigence regarding Palestinian claims to East Jerusalem, most notably a stubborn refusal to cede any sovereignty or real authority over the Old City and its surrounding Palestinian-majority suburbs. Even the widely praised 1993 Oslo Accords were marked by a conscious Israeli strategy to defer and forestall a final, binding settlement on East Jerusalem.¹

Further intractability on the political level

Trump's unilateral and provocative decision has, at least from Israel's perspective, legitimized its annexation of East Jerusalem. The deal-making 'logic' of taking Jerusalem "off the table" has only further diminished the prospect of a final resolution, especially in light of the PNA's consistent and justified refusal to relinquish its claims. Although the official peace process, because of Israel's defiance in settlement expansion, has been stagnant since 2009, this recent declaration from the US (accompanied by an impending embassy relocation) will further erode the prospect of a mutually agreed-upon and lasting solution. It has also disqualified the US from its role as a genuine and non-partisan mediator.

¹ Brown, N. (2003) Palestinian Politics after the Oslo Accords: Resuming Arab Palestine. University of California Press, Berkeley, p.7.





Equality for east Jerusalemites

In light of the glaring disparities that already exist in living standards and access to employment, education and healthcare between east and west Jerusalemites, it is likely that such inequalities and forms of institutionalized discrimination will continue on their current trajectory.² Trump's decision carries with it not only legal and political implications, but also an implicit message that the welfare and livelihoods of East Jerusalem's Palestinian residents will remain solely at the discretion of Israeli policymakers – that is, those who have already revealed their intention to withhold the same de facto rights and orders of treatment that they afford the city's Jewish residents.

² <https://www.acri.org.il/en/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Facts-and-Figures-2017-1.pdf>

