



Media Release

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Following the Australian government's announcement today that it will proceed to both recognise West Jerusalem as Israel's capital and consider an embassy move after a negotiated settlement of the city's final status, we state the following:

Many strong arguments have been advanced between Prime Minister Scott Morrison's floating the idea during the Wentworth by-election campaign and now, and most of them have exposed the faulty thinking and flimsy pretexts that underpin the case of the proponents of this move. Israel considers Jerusalem to be one and the same city, and so recognition of any part of it before serious compromises and genuine concessions have been made will be seen, at least to some extent, as rewarding this intransigence. Australia may make the critical distinction between east and west, but Israel doesn't, and this is what matters. Furthermore, if Mr Morrison's acknowledgement of Palestinian aspirations for a capital in the east is not consonant with all the relevant UN Security Council resolutions on the issue, then it is likely that he has aligned his announcement with President Trump's impending 'Deal of the Century', part of which will seek to establish a Palestinian capital in an eastern suburb such as Abu Dis.

While we do understand the rationale behind the government's decision to confine recognition to the city's west, and there is no doubt that endorsing the two capitals for two states formula is in keeping with international law and signals a genuine commitment to the two-state solution, Israel will likely continue to regard all of the city as its 'eternal and undivided capital'. Without a mechanism to push Israel closer to a compromise over the city's final status, any move such as this one by third parties will be either a hollow gesture or, in Israel's eyes, even a small win towards its vision for one greater and exclusively Jewish Jerusalem.

Finally, open-ended postponement of an embassy move seems to acknowledge that political representation anywhere in Jerusalem would only legitimise the 'one city' status quo, which continues to be cemented via fait accompli, most notably through the annexation wall, the trucking in of Jewish settlers to the east, and forced evictions of Palestinians. This is why the vast majority of countries have decided to maintain their diplomatic missions in Tel Aviv, at least until Israel takes seriously the legitimate Palestinian claims to East Jerusalem and countenances a sovereign Palestinian presence in that part of the city, two things that it has until now refused to do. This deferral is therefore a sensible exit strategy.