

United Nations, Europe, Arab reject US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital; Muslims across

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New York: Muslims across the Middle East on Wednesday warned of disastrous consequences after US President Donald Trump recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital, but in a region more divided than ever, many asked what leaders can do beyond the vehement rhetoric. Countries with Muslim population have warned that such an announcement could harm fragile Mideast peace efforts.

Palestinian protestors burn tires as they wave national flags during a protest at the main Square in Gaza City on December 6.

The United Nations and European Union have also opposed unilateral action on Jerusalem. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that he opposes any unilateral action on Jerusalem that could undermine a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Even major US allies came out against the reversal of US policy on Jerusalem.

Israel captured east Jerusalem, home to sites sacred to Jews, Muslims and Christians, in the 1967 war and considers the entire city its capital. Palestinians claim east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state.

A protester participates in a demonstration near the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul.

British Prime Minister Theresa May said that her government disagreed with Trump's decision. She added that it was "unhelpful" for peaceful efforts. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia called the move "unjustified and irresponsible".

Criticism of Trump's move poured in from Cairo to Tehran to Ankara to war-ravaged Syria, reflecting the anxiety over Trump's announcement, which upends decades of US policy and could ignite violent protests.

Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas said Trump has destroyed America's credibility as a Mideast peace broker, adding in a televised statement that the decision "is a declaration of withdrawal from the role it has played in the peace process."

Egypt, which was the first Arab nation to sign a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, denounced Trump's decision, describing it in a Foreign Ministry statement as a violation of international resolutions on the city's status. The statement said Egypt is worried about the impact of the US move on the stability of the region and about its "extremely negative" impact on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Jordan's King Abdullah II, whose country like Egypt has a peace treaty with Israel, said he had expressed his concerns to Trump in a phone call Tuesday, saying that ignoring Palestinian, Muslim and Christian rights in Jerusalem would only fuel further extremism.

Protesters light flares as they participate in a demonstration near the US Consulate in Istanbul.

He spoke at a meeting with Turkish president Recep Tayyeb Erdogan, who has invited leaders of member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to an extraordinary meeting to discuss Jerusalem's status next week.

In Gaza, hundreds of Palestinian protesters burned American and Israeli flags and waved Palestinian flags and banners proclaiming Jerusalem as "our eternal capital" and calling recognition of it as Israel's capital a "red line." Hamas, the militant group that controls Gaza, called for more protests over the coming days.

Hamas official Salah Bardawil said the Palestinians were "on a dangerous crossroad today; we either remain or perish."

In Beirut, several hundred Palestinian refugees staged a protest in the narrow streets of the Bourj al-Barajneh camp, some of them chanting "Trump, you are mad." And in Turkey, hundreds of people took to the streets to stage demonstrations near US diplomatic missions in Ankara and Istanbul.

Palestinian officials, meanwhile, declared the Mideast peace process "finished." The Palestinian prime minister, Rami Hamdallah, met with European diplomats on Wednesday and told them that the expected US shift on Jerusalem "will fuel conflict and increase violence in the entire region."

It is not clear what, if any, concrete diplomatic action is planned.

Saudi Arabia, a regional powerhouse that could help the White House push through a Middle East settlement, has voiced strong opposition to Trump's move, saying it would "provoke sentiments of Muslims throughout the world."

Palestinian burn a poster of the US President Donald Trump during a protest in Bethlehem, West Bank.

Trump's move puts the Sunni nation, whose king holds the title of "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques," in a bind. The kingdom, particularly its powerful crown prince, Mohammad Bin Salman, enjoys close relations with Trump and his son-in-law Jared Kushner - a relationship that the Saudis need and cannot afford to compromise.

While the Saudis can at least on the surface pressure Trump and distance themselves from Israelis, they will almost certainly continue to cooperate on intelligence sharing regarding Iran.

For its part, Iran will seize upon Trump's move to show itself the defender of Muslims - and Saudi Arabia cannot be seen as acting any less forceful in its opposition to recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

In 1973, Arab oil producers imposed an oil embargo against the United states in retaliation for American military support for Israel, causing soaring gas prices and straining the US economy in a move that demonstrated Saudi Arabia's power and Arab unity at the time.

Such forceful action is all but ruled out nowadays. Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt have invested in good relations with the United States and are at odds with fellow Arab countries over political and religious differences. Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen are mired in wars and conflict, and entire cities have been laid to waste.

Sunni-led Gulf Arab states, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, share with Israel a deep distrust of Shiite power Iran and their relations with Israel have somewhat thawed.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu referred to this Wednesday. While he acknowledged that Israel won't be

able to sign peace treaties with the Arabs without a deal on the Palestinians, he implied that ties have already been established and have plenty of room to grow.

"Peace treaties, no. Everything else below that, yes, and it's happening," he said.

Mohammed ElBaradei, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Egypt's former vice president who now lives in self-imposed exile, suggested Arabs do have options, including radically reducing the billions of Arab money flowing to America and a radical downsizing of diplomatic, military and intelligence relations with the US

"But if reaction will be limited to condemnations and denunciations, silence is the more honorable option," he said in a post on Twitter.

- With AP inputs