

From: Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees
Sent: Wednesday, December 6, 2017 5:24 AM
Subject: President Trump's Decision on Jerusalem

Dear All,

Please find below some of the points that make the decision of President Trump on Jerusalem controversial. Do please share if you deem appropriate...

Personally and as an ecumenical church organization serving Palestinian refugees, I find the move by President Trump as very ill advised on a number of points: First, the Trump Administration is preparing a plan for the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – how can you pre-empt this plan by taking a unilateral decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel? Especially so since Jerusalem was agreed between Israelis and Palestinians in the Oslo Accords to be discussed in the concluding part of the peace process. Second, the US image as a neutral broker for peace between Israel and Palestinians receives a serious blow. Third, the US image in the Arab and Muslim world among the masses, politicians are least concern, is damaged for some time to come. I doubt that whatever the US would do to improve its image would really change the negative image that President Trump's decision has evoked among the masses. Fourth, the decision ignores that Jerusalem is a city for humanity, as the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem have stated in their November 1994 Memorandum on Jerusalem as the Place for Roots. In the Memorandum, in keeping with international consensus, the Heads of Churches called on Palestinians and Israelis to negotiate on the future of the city and to make it a city where Jews, Christians and Muslims can live side by side and feel free as equal citizens of the city. I also would like to refer to the Vatican position on Jerusalem which calls on the two peoples, Palestinians and Israelis, to work together towards a solution acceptable to both of their peoples and to make Jerusalem and Bethlehem an open place where all visitors and pilgrims, together with the local faithful, have an unhindered access. Fifth, the Arab and Muslim Heads of States have repeatedly called for East Jerusalem to be the Capital of the State of Palestine and they linked that with the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 which if Israel accepts would mean recognition by 57 Arab and Muslim countries of the State of Israel. Sixth and most important – the United States, like other countries, has subscribed to the fact that East Jerusalem is occupied territory and that the future of Jerusalem would be determined through negotiations between the two parties. Seventh, the decision by President Trump is problematic with respect to the right given to Jordan in its treaty of peace with Israel that it has special role to play in preserving Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

My conclusion is that given the above points, President Trump's decision does not make sense. It simply does not add up. It further drags all of us down into the abyss of a hopeless future with no peace prospects in the horizon. We were awaiting to see the plan for peace by the Trump Administration but if the decision on Jerusalem is an indication of what to come in the plan, then may God save us from the visions of peace coming out from President Trump and his entourage.

Relevant Statistics on the Old City of Jerusalem for your consideration - Some of the statistics by the Israeli issued Yearbook of Jerusalem points out that for 2015 there were 36,000 people living within the walled old city of Jerusalem. Of these 26,000+ are Muslims; 6,000+ are Christians and 3,000+ are Jews. These statistics reflect the need to have a solution acceptable to all in the city and hence Trump's decision does not touch on the realities of life in the city where almost 40% of the population out of 850,000+ is Palestinian.

Best regards on this Advent Season.

Bernard

Dr. Bernard Sabella
Executive Secretary , DSPR Central Office
Jerusalem
+972-2-6271715 +972-2-6271716 Fax