

Jerusalem Matters

“If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill. If I do not remember you, let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth, if I do not have Jerusalem as my highest joy” (Ps. 137:5-6, MEV). As much as Jews and Christians have in common, there’s no place that’s more central to Jews and Christians than Jerusalem. It’s the city of the kings, prophets and where Jesus preached, worshipped and was crucified. As central as Jerusalem is to our history and our faith, Jerusalem is facing a threat to be re-divided today and a threat to Israel’s sovereignty. Sadly, the threat is not from one of our enemies.

From the 1840s, the U.S. had a consulate in Jerusalem then under the Ottoman Empire. When Israel declared independence in 1948, and Jerusalem as its capital, the consulate became a U.S. diplomatic outpost in Israeli Jerusalem but not the U.S. embassy. That was established in Tel Aviv because the U.S. was not yet prepared to recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, despite the 3000-year-old biblical history and that modern Israel’s seat of government was Jerusalem.

The 1995 U.S. Embassy Act was a bipartisan law, supported overwhelmingly by the U.S. Congress. It called Jerusalem Israel’s capital that Jerusalem “should remain an undivided city” and declared that the U.S. was required to move its embassy there. Because of a clause that allowed all successive presidents to defer doing so, actually moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem didn’t take place until 2018. Then the consulate that had been operating as a separate entity was closed and its work was merged into that of the embassy. So what’s the problem?

First, at the risk of overstating the obvious, Jerusalem is and has been the heart and center of biblical Israel, the Jewish people and modern Israel for over 3000 years. Jerusalem

is mentioned over 600 times in the Bible and zero times in the Koran.

The stand-alone consulate was grandfathered in when Israel restored sovereignty as a nation and when Israel reunited Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War. But U.S. policy remained schizophrenic: supporting Israel but not Israeli authority in Jerusalem. The consulate became a diplomatic office to “the West Bank,” and at the time of the U.S. Embassy Act, a formal diplomatic office to the newly created Palestinian Authority (PA).

Now, the Biden administration wants to reopen the consulate as its diplomatic office to the PA, in the same building in central Jerusalem that is part of sovereign Israel. Such a move is unprecedented with one nation having a diplomatic office to another entity in the capital of a third nation. It also contradicts the U.S.’ own law.

Opening a U.S. consulate to the PA in Jerusalem is a dangerous precedent and not only will not bring peace but pushes peace further out of reach. Recognizing Palestinian Authority sovereignty over any of Jerusalem presupposes the outcome of negotiations that ought to be resolved between the parties. Even if the tried-and-failed “two-state solution” is the default U.S. position, setting up a consulate to the PA in western Jerusalem contradicts that. As a unilateral move, it would embolden the Palestinian Authority, and terrorists within it, by showing Palestinian Arabs that they can win major concessions without negotiating, ceasing terror or any sincerity on their parts.

If the U.S. wants to have a diplomatic office to the PA, it should be in Ramallah along with 39 other countries whose diplomatic offices are there.

Scripture reminds us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Shalom, peace in Hebrew, comes from the same root as “shalem,”

which means “whole.” So when you pray for the peace of Jerusalem, also please pray that the U.S.’ effort to re-divide Jerusalem should fail. Pray for Jerusalem to remain whole, under Jewish and Israeli sovereignty as it should be. You can put action behind your prayers by signing this petition to the Biden administration to cease its concept of pressuring Israel to open a consulate to the PA in Jerusalem. {eoa}

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