

Palestinians to Trump: Jerusalem 'Not for Sale'

Palestinian officials responded to President Donald Trump's tweet threatening to defund the Palestinian Authority by saying they would not be blackmailed and that Jerusalem was not for sale. Meanwhile, Israeli officials said Trump had pulled off the P.A.'s "mask of hypocrisy."

In a pair of tweets, Trump said on Tuesday that "we pay the Palestinians HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS a year and get no appreciation or respect. They don't even want to negotiate a long overdue ... peace treaty with Israel."

He added that, "with the Palestinians no longer willing to talk peace, why should we make any of these massive future payments to them?"

In response to Trump's tweet, Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas' office said Jerusalem is "not for sale," according to a tweet from the AFP.

Abbas' spokesman, Nabil Abu Rdainah, was quoted as saying, "Jerusalem is not for sale, neither for gold nor for silver."

Last September, Abbas expressed optimism about reaching a peace deal with Israel under Trump. But relations soured after Trump announced that the U.S. recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel on December 6 and would move its embassy there. Abbas then said the U.S. could no longer broker an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal.

"Palestinian rights are not for sale. By recognizing Occupied Jerusalem as Israel's capital, Donald Trump has not only violated international law, but he has also single-handedly destroyed the very foundations of peace and condoned Israel's illegal annexation of the city," said PLO Executive Committee

Member Dr. Hanan Ashrawi in response to Trump's tweet.

"We will not be blackmailed. President Trump has sabotaged our search for peace, freedom and justice. Now he dares to blame the Palestinians for the consequences of his own irresponsible actions!" Ashrawi charged.

Another Palestinian official, Nabil Shaath, was quoted telling the *Jerusalem Post* that there was "no justification" for Trump's comments.

He said the Palestinians wanted peace, "but then (Trump) recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, taking the single most important part of negotiations and a two-state solution off the table." He said that Trump was punishing them for protesting that move and that proved Trump "is not a serious man."

Israeli government officials had a different take.

"President Trump is not afraid to say the truth, even if it's not popular. The truth is Jerusalem has always been, and will always be, Israel's capital," said Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett.

"The truth is no peace deal could ever be predicated on the division of Jerusalem. The truth is the U.S. has no interest in funding those who act against its interest. The truth is the Palestinian leadership continues to fund terrorists, using U.S. tax monies," Bennett said.

"By speaking truth, we can stop the fantasy of another Palestinian state in the heart of Israel," he added.

Communications Minister Ayoub Kara said Trump's tweet has pulled the "mask of hypocrisy" off the Palestinians.

Israel's deputy defense minister, Eli Ben Dahan, said a U.S. president had finally told the Palestinians the truth.

"These Arabs have cheated the world for years. They took money from donor countries and instead of building a state, the leaders lined their own pockets," Ben Dahan was quoted as saying in a radio interview. He said Israel would benefit if the Palestinians refused to talk.

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