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**From:** Center for a New American Security  
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**Subject:** CNAS Press Note: Will the President Move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem?

Reports have surfaced that the Trump administration is considering moving the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

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## CNAS PRESS NOTE

### CNAS Press Note: Will the President Move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem?

Washington, November 30 – With reports surfacing that the Trump administration is considering moving the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Center for a New American Security (CNAS) Middle East Security Program Director Ilan Goldenberghas written a new press note providing context and laying out the risks of such a move. The press note “Will the President Move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem?” is below.

There are a number of reports in the American and Israeli press indicating that the White House is seriously considering moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The reason for the speculation is that under the Jerusalem Embassy Relocation Act of 1995 the president must in the next few days either begin the process of recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem or waive the requirement on the grounds that it is not in the U.S. national security interest to proceed with the move at the moment. It seems most likely that at this point the president will waive the requirement and not move ahead with the embassy move, but the final outcome is still uncertain and it is also possible that the administration pursues a middle path solution.

The U.S. government position has long been that by moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem it would be prejudging the final disposition of Jerusalem, which is a final status issue that should be negotiated between the two parties. The reality is, though, that in any two-state agreement Jerusalem will be the capital of Israel and almost certainly also the capital of a new Palestinian state.

Because of its religious significance, Jerusalem is a hot button issue for Israelis, Palestinians, and more broadly across the Muslim world. A unilateral move by the United States with regards to Jerusalem comes with a number of risks. First, the administration has indicated that in the months ahead it plans to propose a peace plan to the parties. Taking this step now unilaterally risks undercutting that process. There is also the risk of an angry response in the Arab world. This could include the targeting of American diplomatic facilities across the region with protests and potential violence. It could also mean instability in Jordan, a close security partner of both Israel and the United States, whose population is majority Palestinian. And there could also be a widespread outbreak of protests or violence in the West Bank and Gaza.

The administration may also be considering other middle ground options. One would be to recognize West Jerusalem as Israel's capital but not move the embassy and say nothing about East Jerusalem, which is the truly contested territory. Another option, which seems less likely, would be to recognize two capitals in Jerusalem and have two American embassies in the city – one for Israelis and one for Palestinians. Given the delicate situation and the fact that the administration is planning to pursue a larger initiative in the months ahead, the wisest move right now would be to simply continue to waive the requirement to move the embassy to Jerusalem.

Goldenberg is available for interviews. To arrange an interview, please contact Neal Urwitz at 202-457-9409 or [nurwitz@cnas.org](mailto:nurwitz@cnas.org).

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