



## ISRAEL REJECTS U.S. DECISION TO RE-OPEN CONSULATE IN EAST JERUSALEM

### Description

**On May 27<sup>th</sup>, Israeli authorities rejected the US plan to reopen its consulate in East Jerusalem, local media reported.**

Israel's Ambassador in Washington, Gilad Erdan, said that the government firmly opposes the move to reopen the consulate catering for the Palestinians within what he described as Israel's "sovereign territory".

According to the Jerusalem Post, the issue was raised during Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on May 26<sup>th</sup>.

That was the day when Blinken announced the decision to reopen the consulate which has historically served as an office in charge of diplomatic relations with Palestine.

Blinken also pledged that the US would provide new aid to help rebuild Gaza as part of efforts to bolster a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel.

Hoping to reverse a move taken by former President Donald Trump that angered Palestinians, Blinken said the United States would advance the process of reopening its Jerusalem consulate that had served as its diplomatic channel to the Palestinians.

Speaking alongside Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in the West Bank city of Ramallah, Blinken said the United States would provide an additional \$75 million in development and economic aid to the Palestinians in 2021, \$5.5 million in immediate disaster relief for Gaza and \$32 million to the U.N. Palestinian aid agency based there.

“We know that to prevent a return to violence we have to use the space created to address a larger set of underlying issues and challenges,” he said. “And that begins with tackling the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza and starting to rebuild.”

At a press conference later in the day, Blinken also warned against actions by Israel or the Palestinians that risk inciting tensions or ultimately undermine the two-state solution to which he said Washington was still committed.

Such actions, he said, included Israeli settlement activity in occupied territory Palestinians seek for a state, possible Israeli evictions of Palestinians from East Jerusalem, and incitement to militant violence on the Palestinian side.

Blinken said reopening the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem would be “an important way for our country to engage with and provide support to the Palestinian people”. He declined to provide a timeline for the reopening.

The Trump administration merged the consulate with the U.S. Embassy in Israel in 2019, two years after recognising Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and moving the embassy there from Tel Aviv.

PA leader Mahmoud Abbas lauded the Biden administration for the announcement, but Israel, evidently, refused it.

“Leaders on both sides will need to chart a better course,” Blinken said, “starting by making real improvements in the lives of people in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank.”

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