

# TRUMP'S "DEAL OF THE CENTURY" AND THE LATIN AMERICAN RESPONSE

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## Introduction

The current conflicts in the Middle East, around Yemen, Syria and Iraq, as well as the tensions with Iran and the internal crisis in Lebanon, have been favoring Israel's positions in the region in the face of the weakening of the Arab consensus to confront the offensives of the imperialist countries - United States of America (USA) and their European allies. In this regard, the war in Syria, which aimed to overthrow the government of Bashar al-Assad in order to boost the US agenda of a new Middle East, failed overwhelmingly.

During the years of the so-called "Arab Spring" and in the course of the war in Syria, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict took a back seat, as a sign that the priorities were not set to resolve these discrepancies but to continue delaying the process of peace in the Levant. This strategy practically paralyzed the negotiations, putting them on the verge of disappearance. Meanwhile, Israel continues with its expansionist policy, with the construction of new settlements in the West Bank, and the population of Gaza is subjected to a permanent blockade by air, sea and land, by the Israeli army, restricting the free movement of its residents as well as the sending of humanitarian aid.

The failure to implement the various peace agreements, since the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) signed the "Oslo Accords" of 1993, has shown the little commitment on the part of the Zionist regime and its American ally to apply them. Since the signing of the "Declaration of Principles" of September 13, 1993 in Washington, the first formal commitment between the Jewish State and the PLO, there were only a few advance in the establishment of a system of Palestinian self-government in Ramallah through direct elections of the leaders who would lead the Palestinian National Authority (PNA): representative of the Palestinians in international forums. The con-

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trol of the Palestinian authorities in some areas was also determined, but the most important aspects: return to the 1967 borders, the return of the Palestinian refugees and the formation of the State with capital in East Jerusalem, were supposedly left for successive "agreements".

The legal framework of the peace process has been reconfigured with the arrival of others US administrations without taking into account the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, who face the systematic dispossession of their lands in complicity with most of the international community. Twenty-five years after Oslo, the situation for the Palestinians continues in sharp decline, without diminishing their capacity to resist the Zionist occupation.

At the multilateral level, the negotiation process has also been torpedoed by the United States, by making repeated use of its right the veto in the Security Council to oppose any resolution that affects the interests of Israel with respect to the conflict with the Palestinians. In this sense, there have been dozens of resolutions passed by the General Assembly of the United Nations and its Security Council that have not been applied, precisely, by the positions of Israel, USA and their European allies.

However, a significant moment in the international arena was the recognition by the UN of Palestine as a "non-member observer State" at the end of 2012. This new situation made it possible for the Palestinian authorities to intervene in the debates of the General Assembly as well as to integrate the different agencies of the United Nations system and other international organizations. Almost 70% of the members of the UN General Assembly (135 of 192) recognize Palestine as a State, despite the obstinacy of the USA and Israel.

## **The Trump-Netanyahu binomial: the US-Israeli alliance strengthens**

The presidential victory of the Republican Donald Trump, against the forecasts of the majority of the analysts, modified the main tendencies of the foreign policy of the United States: the exit of the nuclear agreement with Iran, the commercial "war" with China, the rhetoric against the progressive governments in Latin America, among other elements of their twitter-politics. Towards the Middle East, one of the most significant aspects has been the strengthening of the strategic alliance with Israel, its positions against the government of Syria, the relations with Saudi Arabia and the attacks against Iran: all within the framework of the war against terrorism.

Undoubtedly, Israel is the nucleus of its projection towards the Middle

East, to contain the “enemies” of the United States and to work the “alliance” with its economic partners and regional allies. Israel continues to be one of the largest recipients of US aid, mainly in the area of subsidies for access to advanced military weapons. Annually, this military aid is about 3.1 billion dollars and by 2019, it would increase to 3.8 billion.

In this sense, the Trump administration wants to present itself as the fundamental actor in the “solution” of the Palestinian conflict, imposing its precepts and conceptions so that the Palestinians accept a peace plan that only benefits USA and Israel. The steps taken by the current Republican administration have the objective of annihilating the Palestinian cause, not recognizing the rights and the historical demands of this people, even if it has to go over dozens of UN resolutions and declarations of international leaders.

One of the first actions carried out by the US in order to intensify its relations with Israel was its recognition of the historic city of Jerusalem as the capital of this country, a city that since the Ottoman Turkish Empire, has enjoyed a special status, due to the confluence of the three main monotheistic religions and places of coexistence among these beliefs. This occurred precisely in the context of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel. In this way, the US government violated all the resolutions and agreements adopted with respect to maintaining the status quo in Jerusalem.

The announcement was made on December 6, 2017 followed by a strong rejection by a good part of the international community. This news was very well received by the Zionist authorities who expected that a dozen other countries would also do the same and support the actions of Washington. In the case of European capitals, none of their governments endorsed such a decision, but on the contrary, it provoked criticism from the main authorities of the European Union (EU). Despite the international rejection, the United States took the matter to the United Nations and despite receiving an almost unanimous rejection of the States present there, on May 14, 2018, they transfer its Embassy to Jerusalem, occupying the building that housed the American consulate in the Arnoma neighborhood. A large delegation headed by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin attended the opening ceremony.

The US administration has continued its policy of pressure against Palestinian leaders. One of his last actions was the closing of the PLO office - which contains various Palestinian groups - in Washington, in September 2018. The justification for this action was, according to the State Department, that the PLO leaders had condemned the peace plan proposed by USA, without they had seen it and that they refused to work with the US government.

The international repercussion was immediate. The Secretary General of the Executive Committee of the PLO, Saeb Erekat, described the decision

as deliberate<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile, HossamBadran, a member of the Political Bureau of Hamas Movement, considered this action as a manifestation that the negotiation process had reached a dead point<sup>3</sup>. The Palestinian ambassador in Washington HusamZomlot, condemned, in the strongest terms, the decision of the US administration to close the Palestinian mission to the United States.

As a result of the denunciation that the ANP made in May 2018, against Israel before the International Criminal Court (ICC), for the settlements and the death of hundreds of Palestinians, the White House National Security Advisor, John Bolton, also threatened sanctions against the ICC if it decided to investigate the United States or Israel for issues related to Palestine<sup>4</sup>. In this regard, he referred to sanctioning the funds of the ICC in the USA and to prohibit the entry into the country of its judges and prosecutors. But the threats were also made against any company or other states that cooperated in an ICC investigation against Americans, in a clear allusion to violating international law.

The punitive actions were not only in this plane. In order to strengthen its positions vis-à-vis the Palestinians, the United States also closed the funds allocated to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). The funds were valued at some \$ 200 million aimed at offering humanitarian aid for the 5 million Palestinians in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. During a meeting of the Arab League (LA) held in Cairo, Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad al-Maliki said that the Trump administration had launched an attack on the Palestinian people and international law, by canceling funds to UNRWA.

Once again, the discursive rhetoric referred to the fact that as long as Hamas controlled the Gaza Strip, the funding for that Agency would not be resumed<sup>5</sup>. Of course, the government of Benjamin Netanyahu supported this provision and welcomed the decision of the United States to close the Palestinian representation in Washington.

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2 See: *Washington Officially Announces the Closure of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Office*. September 11, 2018. Available in: <http://www.en.syria-scope.com/political-news/85848>

3 See: *Hamas: The Closure of The Headquarters of The PLO in Washington Confirms The Failure of The Settlement Process*. September 11, 2018. Available in: <http://www.en.syria-scope.com/palestine-news/85843>

4 See: *La Casa Blanca amenazará con sanciones a la CPI si investiga a EE.UU o Israel*. Agencia EFE, 10 de septiembre de 2018. Available in: <https://es.noticias.yahoo.com/casa-blanca-amenazar%C3%A1-sanciones-cpi-investiga-ee-uu-161823957.html>

5 See: *US cuts to UN refugee agency an 'attack on Palestinians & international law'*. Palestinian FM, 11 de septiembre de 2018. Available in: <https://www.rt.com/news/438179-trump-attack-palestinians-funding/>

All these measures against the authorities and the Palestinian people have only reinforced and reaffirmed the positions of total alignment of the White House with Israel. They also acted in retaliation for the Palestinian decision to sue Israel before the ICC for the construction and expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem. These acts confirm that the Donald Trump government is committed to protecting Israel from its unlawful acts, not promoting the two-State solution and eliminating any possibility of condemning Israel for violating the human rights of the Palestinian people<sup>6</sup>.

What has been expressed up to now is part of the set of pressures that the Trump administration are implementing both at the international level - threats against the ICC and against governments that do not support them in their resolutions at the UN - and against the Palestinian authorities, to force them to accept its arbitrary and tax peace agreement known as the “new deal of the century” that excludes the demands sustained by the Palestinian side and reinforces Israel’s positions.

## Donald Trump and his unilateral “new deal of the century”

The agreements discussed, signed and ratified through the mediation of the different international actors have not been effective in solving the historic conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, rather, they have contributed to the strengthening of Israel’s positions. In this sense, the new US proposal introduces additional elements that seek to find a solution that benefits Israel even more. This agreement comes in a regional context characterized by the defeat of Western plans to use terrorist groups to divide and weaken the Middle East.

This agreement, which has its antecedents in old Zionist aspirations such as the Alon plan and the Yinón Plan, seeks to divide the West Bank and unite what remains with Gaza and Jordan to create a Palestinian-Jordanian “State”. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas revealed that the US negotiating team offered him a plan based on a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation. This is not a completely new idea as stated Jamal Amal, Professor of Political Theory at the University of Tel Aviv. However, Abbas argued that the administrative implications of the plan proposed by the Americans were not precise or what level of autonomy the Palestinian state would have under a confeder-

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6 See: Rafael Mathus Ruiz. *Nuevo golpe de Trump al proceso de paz en Medio Oriente: ordenó el cierre de la oficina de la OLP*. Washington, 11 de septiembre de 2018. Available in: <https://es.noticias.yahoo.com/golpe-trump-proceso-paz-medio-o52330433.html>

ation with Jordan and insisted that it rejected the offer as long as Israel was not part of that "confederation"<sup>7</sup>.

The announcement of this plan was made by Donald Trump's main advisers for the Middle East region: his son-in-law Jared Kushner and his assistant for international affairs Jason Greenblatt - former vice president of the Trump Organization - who had been working on it since the spring of 2017. One of the objectives of the last trip made by Kushner to the region, in which he also visited Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, was to finalize the details of the draft peace plan with Saudi and Qatari leaders. Neither Kushner nor the American envoy Jason Greenblatt met with Abbas or other Palestinian officials during that trip. US rhetoric continues to question the Palestinian president's ability to achieve peace, blaming him for the deterioration of the situation in Gaza.

To date (October 2018) the details of the agreement proposed by Trump remain imprecise. It was stated that during his speech before the United States, Trump would announce his proposal for peace for the Middle East, however, the official revelation of it was postponed after the midterm elections in the United States. This has not made it impossible for some of the ideas conceived to have infiltrated the press. At the same time, the actions of the United States during the first year of Trump arose that the plan is already being applied step by step by Israel and its allies or at least the scenario is being prepared for its future assimilation by the United States and the international community.

The main points proposed by the plan would be the following:

- **Annexation of the Gaza Strip by Egypt<sup>8</sup>:** this would be done in exchange for ambitious economic investments both there and in the north of the Sinai, financed mainly by the Sunni Gulf countries. In this sense, the population of the Strip could work on infrastructure projects in northern Egyptian Sinai such as solar plants, desalination plants and several industrial corridors. The plan does not specify if they could live in this Egyptian region bordering Gaza. In this way, the Gaza Strip would be granted a "special status" before eventually linking it to Egypt.

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7 See: Maya Siminovich. *El presidente palestino revela que EE UU le propuso formar una confederación con Jordania*. EFE, 3 de septiembre de 2018. Available in: <https://www.20minutos.es/noticia/3429056/0/eeuu-propuso-abas-confederacion-jordania/#xtor=AD-15&xts=467263>

8 This idea of using the Egyptian region of Sinai is not entirely new. The Republican administration of George W. Bush had raised to the Egyptian president and ally among the Arabs, Hosni Mubarak, the cession to Gaza of a third of the territory of the North of Sinai, a question that has been opposed by successive Egyptian governments.

- **Annexation of Jerusalem:** The recognition of the Palestinian neighborhoods of Jerusalem that remained outside the walls after 2004, as the potential capital of a future Palestinian State, while those that remain intramural -including the old city and adjoining neighborhoods, but also other peripheral enclaves- would remain under Israeli jurisdiction. The condition of indivisibility of Jerusalem was included in the Basic Law of Nationality approved by the Knesset, which consecrates the holy city as the unique capital of Israel.

In short: Jerusalem would be recognized as the capital of Israel, while a suburb of Jerusalem, probably the Arab city of Abu Dis, would serve as the administrative capital of Palestine. These two events: the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the approval of the law of the “Jewish nation state” clearly indicate the partial implementation of said agreement.

- **Annexation of the Jordan Valley:** Israel would unilaterally annex 50% of the West Bank (including the prosperous Jordan Valley and accesses to the Dead Sea) and instead grant citizenship to the Palestinians and Bedouins residing there (which is why Israel tries to evacuate Bedouin settlements in the area). The maximum possible territory would be annexed with the minimum population necessary to make it acceptable to the international community.

In this way, Israel would have military control of the West Bank of the Jordan River Valley and would annex large portions of the settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, now under the legal umbrella offered by the law of the “Jewish nation state” to continue stealing new lands from the Palestinians. This stance is contrary to that raised by the Obama administration, when it advocated a progressive return of the Jordan Valley to the Palestinians and a joint exploitation of the resources of the Dead Sea.

- **Annexation of other territories in the eastern part of Israel:** in line with the Israeli national security doctrine, the Trump administration also demands the annexation of areas that are equal to the cities of Netanya, on the Israeli side and Tulkarem, in the Palestinian, where there are large blocks of settlements such as Ariel, which would go to Israel.

- **Return of Palestinian refugees:** the US proposal will advocate for refugees who wish to “return” to the emerging and very small Palestinian state; and that the host countries -Jordania, Lebanon and Syria, but also the monarchies of the Persian Gulf- nationalize them and make them citizens in exchange for economic aid. In this way, the Palestinians would give up returning to their lands. While the emigration of Jews from all over the world is encouraged, Palestinian refugees do not have the same right.

- **Borders:** the borders between what would be left of Palestine and Israel would be fixed later. This plan abandons the possibility of returning to the 1967 borders.



- **Displacement of Palestinians:** Israel would have control over the movement of Palestinians between the Gaza Strip and those left in the small West Bank. A corridor would be created between the Palestinian territory and the sacred sites in Jerusalem.

Four Arab countries guaranteed support for this agreement: Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. However, the Arab reactions have been very controversial, on the one hand Saudi King Salman warned that he would withdraw his support if the Palestinians did not receive the eastern part of Jerusalem in line with the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002, which demanded the return to the 1967 borders and the Palestinian character of East Jerusalem.

According to CengizTomar, Dean of the Department of Political Science of the University of Marmara and Director of the Center for Palestinian Studies of that institute, with respect to Palestine there are two groups: the "The Southern Block", composed of the United States, the Gulf States and Egypt, which is in total disagreement with the "The Northern Bloc", consisting of Turkey, Russia and Iran. In this regard, the professor points out how the countries that are most hostile to Iran and that support the US sanctions against Tehran, are the same ones that approve Trump's "deal of the century", while Turkey, which opposes the sanctions of the United States, which has always supported the Palestinian cause, continues to be a thorn in the side of the US and Israel, which is why Washington increased the pressure on Ankara<sup>9</sup>.

According to Ana Garralda, with this plan, the United States managed to reduce Palestine to a mere "Autonomy Plus", without territorial contiguity, economic viability or the minimum level of sovereignty to be considered a State, finally burying the two-State model defended by all administrations previous Americans<sup>10</sup>.

The plan of the Yankee-Zionist-Arab century is certainly not a peace plan for the Palestinians, nor is its primary objective to improve the socio-economic situation of its population, but it is an integral part of a much more ambitious project that, together to the division of Syria as part of the Balkanization of the Middle East, is aimed at securing the conditions for Israel to become a regional power<sup>11</sup>.

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9 Cengiz Tomar. "El Acuerdo del Siglo" de Trump y el fin de los días. Agencia Anadolu, 4 de agosto de 2018. Available in: <https://www.aa.com.tr/es/an%C3%A1lisis/el-acuerdo-del-siglo-de-trump-y-el-fin-de-los-22731>

10 See: Ana Garralda. *El inaceptable "acuerdo del siglo" de Donald Trump*. Estudios de Política Exterior, 3 de agosto de 2018. Available in: <http://cpalsocial.org/el-inaceptable-acuerdo-del-siglo-de-donald-trump-2444>

11 See: Nicola Hadwa y Silvia Domenech. *El acuerdo del siglo, máxima hipocresía y mínimo de*



There has been a strong synergy between the steps taken by the new US administration and the measures that Israel implements. This indicates that there is a clear Israeli-American complicity in applying the main aspects of Trump's proposed plan in an overlapping and systematic manner.

The Palestinian authorities in the Muqata, the administrative headquarters of the Palestinian Authority, have opposed this "new" Yankee initiative, while they have discredited US mediation since the US decided to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. For these reasons, the president of the PNA, Mahmoud Abbas, has reiterated his rejection of Trump's "deal of the century" because, in his opinion, "it is aimed at liquidating the Palestinian cause." For this reasons the deal has met with the objections of the Palestinian side.

## Latin America and Palestine: between US pressures and the relations with Israel

The Palestinian cause has also had an important support base from Latin America, especially through the work of dozens of civil society organizations, solidarity groups with Palestine and even some Latin American governments. In this relationship, Cuba has been the country that has uninterruptedly maintained its bonds of brotherhood with the Palestinian cause.

Within the Latin American context, several milestones could be mentioned in that relationship of solidarity and brotherhood. An important date in this regard was the "Meeting of the United Nations for Latin America and the Caribbean in support of the Israeli-Palestinian peace" that took place in March 2011 in Montevideo, the Uruguayan capital. One of its objectives was to define how the countries of Latin America could contribute to the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This event also coincided with the diplomatic campaign developed by the ANP to obtain the recognition of the State of Palestine with the borders prior to the Six Day War and with East Jerusalem as its capital. This process, which had begun in 2009, culminated on September 23, 2011 with the formalization by Mahmud Abbas on behalf of the PLO of his membership in the UN.

## Latin American countries that recognize the State of Palestine

Country	Recognition date
Cuba	November 16, 1988
Nicaragua	November 16, 1988
Paraguay	March 25, 2005
Costa Rica	February 5, 2008
Venezuela	April 27, 2009
Dominican Republic	July 14, 2009
Brazil	December 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2010
Argentina	December 6, 2010
Bolivia	December 17, 2010
Ecuador	December 24, 2010
Chile	January 7, 2011
Guyana	January 14, 2011
Peru	January 24, 2011
Suriname	February 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2011
Uruguay	March 15, 2011
El Salvador	August 25, 2011
Honduras	August 26, 2011
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	August 29, 2011
Belize	September 9, 2011
Dominica	September 19, 2011
Guatemala	April 9, 2013
Colombia	August 3, 2018

In January 2011, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay issued a written reaffirmation of the recognition by its government of the State of Palestine. At the same time, a dozen Latin American countries recognized the State of Palestine during the course of 2011. Previously, they had already done so throughout 2010: Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia and Ecuador, which were among the progressive Latin American countries of the moment. The recognition of Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia and Ecuador specified that it was within the 1967 borders, while Chile, Peru and Uruguay did not include details on the borders. In this way, more than 100 nations added that from Latin Amer-

ica, Asia and Africa, they recognized Palestine as a State<sup>12</sup>.

In September 2012, the Palestinian authorities requested a change of status within the UN, from “observer entity” to “non-member observer State”. In November of that same year, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted Resolution 67/19, with 138 votes in favor, 9 against and 41 abstentions, which was a victory for the Palestinians in the international arena. This measure gave them the right to speak but without the possibility of voting in the UN.

With the arrival of the new administration to the White House, the interventionist policy of the United States towards Latin America was strengthened: tour by the former Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson for the region, increase in economic sanctions and subversion work against the government of Venezuela, the reactivation of the Lima Group, the strengthening of the right in Brazil, Argentina and Ecuador, as well as attempts to undermine regional mechanisms of consensus such as the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and strengthen the Organization of American States (OAS).

The radical changes in the US foreign policy: abandonment of multilateralism, rupture of the nuclear agreement with Iran and its positions in the UN with respect to Israel, also had their repercussions in the Latin American area, especially because of the threats of Washington to take count on those countries that voted against them in the UN. Also the year 2017, within the framework of the centenary of the Balfour Declaration, was marked by the first Latin American tour of the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. This Israeli-American offensive reactivated the role of the Palestinian diaspora in Latin America. In early January 2017, the Palestinian Club of Chile, together with other local organizations, convened a meeting of Palestinian communities in Latin America, to condemn the attack by the Israeli regime against the Gaza Strip, whose objective was to weaken the formation of unity government, after the reconciliation between the main political movements of Palestine<sup>13</sup>.

However, the call provoked differences with the Palestinian Confederation of Latin America and the Caribbean (COPLAC). Some argued that the COPLAC, after the Oslo Accords, had been deactivated as the rest of the

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12 See: *Debatirán papel de América Latina en conflicto entre Israel y Palestina*. Available in: <https://www.americaeconomia.com/politica-sociedad/debatiran-papel-america-latina-conflicto-israel-y-palestina>

13 See: *Comunidades Palestinas de América Latina, condenan el crimen israelí de hoy en Gaza*. Resumen Latinoamericano, Palestina Libre, 30 de octubre de 2017. Available in: <http://www.resumenlatinoamericano.org/2017/10/30/comunidades-palestinan-de-america-latina-condenan-el-crimen-israeli-de-hoy-en-gaza/>

popular organizations of the PLO had done. With the support of the ANP, COPLAC called for an IV Congress for the communities of the continent, in Managua (Nicaragua), to be held on October 19. Present at this conclave were Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad al-Maliki and representatives of President Mahmoud Abbas<sup>14</sup>.

This episode generated internal frictions and fissures within the forces of the Palestinian diaspora in the continent, because since November 2014, Chilean organizations had taken the initiative to call communities in the continent to resume the historic role of the COPLAC. For its part, the Palestinian Club of Chile, along with other organizations, held its meeting on October 30, 2017. On this occasion, they made a call to form a Palestinian institution at the continental level, always respecting and coordinating with the PLO and its institutions, at the same time that they exhorted not to promote or reproduce directly or indirectly in Latin America, the factors of division that exist within Palestine<sup>15</sup>.

Another fact that marked the positions of the governments of the region with respect to Palestine was the voting process in the UN General Assembly at the end of 2017. The day was characterized by a divided vote with respect to the resolution presented condemning the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Of the total of 193 member states, 128 voted in favor of rejecting the United States' decision, there were 35 abstentions, 9 against, and 21 States were absent on the day of the vote. Among those who were against were: Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Togo, United States and Israel.

As evidenced, despite the fact that there were 17 countries in the area that opposed, the rest abstained or were among those who were absent that day. With respect to the Argentine government, which has a marked right-wing tendency, its position in the face of these facts is striking.

The Argentine Foreign Ministry, from the Palacio de San Martín, lamented the unilateral US measures on Jerusalem and reiterated its support for the celebration of rounds of dialogue between the Palestinians and the Israelis to reach a political agreement. In the statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, Argentina expressed its support for the special regime of Al-Quds as

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<sup>14</sup> See: *Defensores de palestinos en Latinoamérica se reunirán en Nicaragua*. 16 de octubre de 2017. Available in: <https://www.hispantv.com/noticias/sudamerica/356649/america-latina-caribe-comunidad-causa-palestina>

<sup>15</sup> See: *Comunidades palestinas de América Latina realizarán Congreso Preparatorio en Chile*. 21 de octubre de 2017, Palestina Libre. Available in: <http://www.palestinalibre.org/articulo.php?a=66064>

established by Resolution 181 (1947) of the General Assembly of the United Nations, which leaves the government over the city of a special international regime<sup>16</sup>.

### Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in the vote in the UN against the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel<sup>17</sup>

Votación		A favor	En contra	Abstenciones	Total 193
Países	<b>Centroamérica</b>	Nicaragua, Belice, Costa Rica.	Guatemala, Honduras.	México, Panamá.	
	Total parcial	3	2	2	7
	<b>Caribe</b>	San Vicente y Granadinas, Barbados, Surinam, Cuba, Dominica, Granada.		Trinidad y Tobago, Haití, Jamaica, Antigua y Barbuda, Bahamas, República Dominicana.	
	Total parcial	6		6	12
	<b>América del Sur</b>	Chile, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brasil, Guyana, Perú, Uruguay Venezuela.		Argentina, Colombia, Paraguay.	
	Total parcial	8		3	11
	<b>Total de la región</b>	17	2	11	30
<b>Por ciento</b>		13.28%	22.22%	31.42%	
<b>Total general</b>		128	9	35	172
					89.11%
<b>Ausentes</b>					21

### Guatemala, Honduras and Paraguay recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel

As a result of the same pressures from the US, just two days after the

<sup>16</sup> See: *Argentina lamenta 'medidas unilaterales' de EEUU sobre Jerusalén*. 7 de diciembre de 2017. Available in: <https://www.hispantv.com/noticias/argentina/361835/trump-jerusalen-capital-israel-embajada-eeuu-palestina>

<sup>17</sup> See: *La Asamblea General de la ONU aprueba una moción contra la decisión de Estados Unidos de reconocer a Jerusalén como la capital de Israel*. BBC Mundo, 21 diciembre 2017. Available in: <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-42446206>

opening of its embassy in Jerusalem, other Latin American countries seconded the US initiative. The first to do so were precisely those who had backed Washington's decision at the United Nations.

There were only two votes against: Guatemala and Honduras, meaning that these two countries were the only ones in the region that supported the United States. Precisely, the first to make the transfer was Guatemala, due to a clear warning by the US to take note of those who opposed his decision, by eliminating any financial aid, as indicated by his ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, in a threatening tone.

Therefore, the next country was from the Central American area: Guatemala, which had been the second in the world, behind the USA - historical coincidence - in recognizing the existence of the Jewish State in 1948 and one of the last in the region to recognize to Palestine in 2013. During the opening of his diplomatic legation, at Jerusalem's Malha Technological Park, Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales described the event as an "important moment" and a "courageous decision"<sup>18</sup>.

Meanwhile, the Honduran parliament passed a non-binding resolution to also approve the transfer of its embassy to Jerusalem. As indicated by the press of this country, after this decision was the intention of President Juan Orlando Hernandez to seek better relations with the US. The motion, promoted by the deputy Tomás Zambrano was finally approved by the Honduran National Congress with 59 votes in favor and 33 against<sup>19</sup>. The initiative had to be confirmed later by the Executive. The news was very well received by the Israeli authorities, who automatically declared that they would expand their cooperation programs with Honduras. To this end, the Head of the Israeli Agency for the Development of International Cooperation (MASHAV), Gil Haskel, led a delegation from his country that met with officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of this Central American nation.

Now was the opportunity of another country, but now from the Southern Cone: Paraguay, which for decades has been one of the closest allies of the United States in Latin America and had abstained in the UN vote on Jerusalem. The Paraguayan government had announced on May 7 that it would relocate its embassy by the end of that month and for that purpose, President Horacio Cartes (2013-2018), of the Colorado Party, traveled to Israel on the 21st

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<sup>18</sup> See: *Guatemala, Honduras y Paraguay, los países latinoamericanos que siguen a Estados Unidos en la apertura de sus embajadas en Jerusalén*. Redacción BBC Mundo, 16 mayo 2018. Available in: <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-44112856>

<sup>19</sup> See: *Aprueban moción para trasladar embajada de Honduras en Israel a Jerusalén*. La Prensa, 12 de abril de 2018. Available in: [https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1168432-410/trasladar-embajada-honduras-jerusalen-tel\\_aviv-israel-congreso-](https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1168432-410/trasladar-embajada-honduras-jerusalen-tel_aviv-israel-congreso-)

of the same month. For its part, the government of the Israeli Prime Minister spoke of at least half a dozen countries had planned to do the same, promising “preferential treatment” to the first ten that did so<sup>20</sup>.

## Tour of Mahmud Abbas in South America

The last tour of the Palestinian president, during the month of May 2018, in the South American region, which took him to visit Venezuela, Chile and Cuba, took place in the context of the protests that took place in the Gaza Strip and a few days before the decision of the United States to move his embassy to Jerusalem. For these reasons, President Mahmoud Abbas called on the Latin American countries to continue supporting the Palestinian cause and not to back Washington in this regard<sup>21</sup>.

During his meeting with the president of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro, Abbas recalled that the decision taken by the US president violated international law. For his part, Maduro expressed his support for the Palestinian cause after signing several agreements on bilateral cooperation in the tourism, business and trade sectors. In the area of tourism, a document was signed between the Director General of the Palestinian International Cooperation Agency, Imad Zuhairi, and the Venezuelan Minister of Tourism, Marlenys Contreras, while in the business it was agreed to establish the council of Palestinian-Venezuelan businessmen<sup>22</sup>.

A fundamental stop on his Latin American tour had to include Chile. This country was one of the first to open an Office of Representation before the PNA in 1998 and recognized the Palestinian State since January 7, 2011. This South American nation also has the largest Palestinian community in the world after the Arab territories, with around of half a million citizens. The president of Palestine held bilateral talks here with his counterpart Sebastián Piñera, at the Palacio de La Moneda. In his previous term, Piñera had made a visit to the Palestinian territories in 2011 so that on the occasion of his re-election in December 2017 for four years, Piñera received the congratulations of

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20 Around 25 states have at least consular representation in Jerusalem and the Vatican has an apostolic delegation in this city.

21 See: *Abbas urges Latin America not to follow US example on embassy*. AFP and Time of Israel, 8 May 2018. Available in: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/abbas-urges-latin-america-not-to-follow-us-example-on-embassy/>

22 See: *Venezuela y Palestina firman acuerdos de cooperación*. Telesur, 7 de mayo de 2018. Available in: <https://www.telesurtv.net/news/venezuela-palestina-firman-acuerdos-cooperacion--20180507-0032.html>



President Abbas<sup>23</sup>.

## Colombia: last country of South America to recognize Palestine

Paradoxically, the Colombian government, which has been one of the largest allies of the USA in the South American area and where there is a strong US military presence, decided to make a radical change of its foreign policy towards the Middle East: the recognition of Palestine as a State. This event occurred in the final stage of the mandate of Juan Manuel Santos<sup>24</sup>. In the year 2018 there was the alternation of government in Colombia, but the contradictory legacy of Santos would not be made public until a day after the inauguration of Iván Duque at the head of the Colombian presidency, on August 7.

The information was confirmed by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, MaríaÁngela Holguín. The former Colombian diplomacy indicated in a letter she addressed to her Palestinian counterpart the ratification of the decision to recognize the Palestinian territories "as a free, independent and sovereign state." Meanwhile, Israel was "surprised and disappointed" by the decision to recognize the Palestinian state, because Colombia, in the 2012 vote of the United Nations General Assembly, which granted the PLO the status of observer State, was the only country in the area that abstained.

Despite the new political scenario in Colombia, acting Chancellor Carlos Holmes Trujillo affirmed that the matter would be subject to an evaluation, without it being clear whether this implied a suspension of recognition or not. The contradictions seem clear, because during his election campaign, Ivan Duque expressed his intention to follow the steps of the United States and recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. On the other hand, some 60 Colombian academics from different universities, journalists and specialists in international relations, asked the government, through a letter, to maintain the recognition of Palestine<sup>25</sup>. Although the Palestinian embassy in Bogotá thanked Colombia for its decision, it still remained to be seen if it is a consolidated position.

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23 See: *Presidente de Palestina realiza visita oficial a Chile*. Prensa Latina, 9 de mayo de 2018. Disponible en: <http://www.palestinalibre.org/articulo.php?a=68451>

24 See: *El Gobierno de Santos reconoce a Palestina como Estado antes de entregar el poder*. Bogotá, 9 de agosto de 2018. Available in: [https://elpais.com/internacional/2018/08/08/colombia/1533761934\\_031445.html](https://elpais.com/internacional/2018/08/08/colombia/1533761934_031445.html)

25 To access the complete list of signatures in the letter see: *Académicos colombianos le pidieron a Duque respaldo en reconocimiento de Palestina*. El Espectador, 10 de agosto de 2018. Available in: <http://www.palestinalibre.org/articulo.php?a=69805>

However, President Ivan Duque affirmed that the recognition made by former President Juan Manuel Santos to Palestine as a State was irreversible and argued that since the Oslo Accords, he had always believed that the ideal solution for the Middle East was the Two-State solution. This statement was not well received by Israel, whose government continued to demand that the highest Colombian authorities revert their recognition of Palestine<sup>26</sup>.

## Paraguay modifies its position towards Jerusalem

The political alternation in Paraguay, in August 2018, produced a sharp turn with regard to the position of the previous government towards Jerusalem. The Paraguayan president, Mario Abdo Benítez, of the same Colorado Party, announced his decision to move his diplomatic headquarters back to Tel Aviv, due to the criticism that this decision had generated. The reaction of Israel did not wait: withdrew his ambassador from Paraguay and closed the embassy in Asuncion. Israel described Paraguay's decision as "serious" and stressed that the situation deteriorated the relationship between the two countries. Given these events, the US Vice President, Mike Pence, contacted the Paraguayan president to press, but this did not take effect. This victory of the Palestinian Authority was part of the diplomatic efforts that its leaders had been making, denouncing how many regulations of international law were violated with the "recognition" of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel<sup>27</sup>.

The only two Latin American countries that do not recognize Palestine are Panama and Mexico. With respect to the first, it should be remembered that it was one of the 9 countries that voted against granting that status to the PLO at the UN in 2012, along with Canada, the Czech Republic, the USA, Israel, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Naurú and Palau. As for Mexico, although in that year it voted in favor, it still did not recognize the State of Palestine<sup>28</sup>. It would remain to see, if after the new change of government in Mexico, by a progressive executive, this situation could be reversed.

- The change in the correlation of political forces in Latin America in favor of right-wing and pro-US governments can generate greater uncertain-

26 See: *Reconocimiento a Palestina como Estado 'es irreversible': Iván Duque*. El Tiempo, 3 de septiembre de 2018. Available in: <https://www.eltiempo.com/mundo/latinoamerica/colombiano-anulara-reconocimiento-a-palestina-como-estado-263666>

27 See: *Tras el regreso de la embajada a Tel Aviv: Mike Pence habló con presidente de Paraguay*. Agencia AJN, 6 septiembre de 2018. Available in: <https://agenciaajn.com/noticia/tras-el-regreso-de-la-embajada-a-tel-aviv-mike-pence-hablo-con-presidente-de-paraguay-103644>

28 See: *Colombia: ¿podrá Iván Duque revertir el reconocimiento de Palestina?* Palestina Libre, 10 de agosto de 2018. Available in: <http://www.palestinalibre.org/articulo.php?a=69806>

ty regarding the progress that the PLO had made in this region in previous years.

- For its part, the new right-wing government in Brazil is threatening to move the Embassy of its country to Jerusalem and even to break diplomatic relations with Palestine.

- The victory of the leftist candidate in Mexico favors a greater balance of the progressive forces in the region and therefore, the consolidation of support for the legitimate cause of the Palestinian people for their independence.

- The most consistent positions with the Palestinian cause come from the governments of Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia and Nicaragua.

At the XXIV Annual Meeting of the Forum of Sao Paulo, which was held in Havana from July 15 to 17, 2018 and attended by 479 delegates from political parties, movements and left-wing groups in Latin America and the Caribbean, was ratified the support of the social and progressive movements of Latin America to the just cause of the Palestinian people. This was expressed in this meeting by SamerManaa, member of the Central Committee of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

## Cuba: historical support for the Palestinian cause

Cuba's position in the face of the historic Palestinian conflict has remained almost uninterrupted. These ties go back even to 1947, when Cuba was the only country in the Latin American region that opposed the partition of Palestine into an Arab State and a Jewish one into the General Assembly of the United Nations. Support for the Palestinian cause took on a new dimension after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, which defined Cuba's support for the progressive and anti-colonialist movements in the so-called Third World, including the Arab world. In this regard, the ties of brotherhood between Fidel Castro and the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat stand out. On November 17, 1974, both countries established diplomatic relations.

Since then, the Cuban position has been very clear and constant with respect to the settlement of the conflict, the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people, the creation of its State with capital in East Jerusalem, within the 1967 borders, the return of the Palestinians to their lands and has condemned, in all possible multilateral forums, Israel's systematic aggressions against the civilian population in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

With this historical background and respect for the Palestinian people, we understand the clear position of Cuba against the US decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, considering it a flagrant violation of

international law that violates the legitimate interests of the Palestinian people. According to the Cuban Foreign Ministry, modifying the “historic status” of Jerusalem will “further increase tensions” in the Middle East and impede any effort aimed at resuming peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians. Therefore, Cuba demanded Israel’s immediate end to the occupation of the Palestinian territories, aggressive policies and colonizing practices in these territories. In 2016, Miguel Díaz-Canel, who at that time was the First Vice President of the State Councils and Minister, received the Palestinian Foreign Minister, Riad al-Maliki and then in 2018, the Minister of Education, Sabri-Saidam.

Ambassador Anayansi Rodríguez Camejo, Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations, during her intervention during the 10th emergency special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on the topic “Illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, “expressed the overwhelming rejection of Cuba”. The delegation of Cuba co-sponsored and voted in favor of the draft resolution entitled “Statute of Jerusalem”, which expressed that any decision or action whose meaning is to alter the character, status or demographic composition of the Holy City of Jerusalem has no legal effect, it is considered null and must be repealed, in compliance with the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council. In this regard, the adopted text called on all States to refrain from establishing diplomatic missions in Jerusalem.

The Declaration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba, issued on December 6, 2017, stated the following:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba expresses its deepest concern and rejection for the unilateral declaration by the President of the United States of the city of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, which constitutes a serious and flagrant violation of the Charter of the UN, of International Law and of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations<sup>29</sup>.

The Cuban diplomat also called on the Security Council to adopt the necessary decisions and to demand of Israel the immediate end of the occupation of the Palestinian territories and of the aggressive policies and colonizing practices, as well as the fulfillment of the resolutions approved by that organ

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<sup>29</sup> *Cuba rechaza declaración unilateral de Trump sobre Jerusalén como capital de Israel*. Cubaminrex, 6 de diciembre de 2017. Available in: <http://www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2017/12/06/cuba-rechaza-declaracion-unilateral-de-trump-sobre-jerusalen-como-capital-de-israel/#.W7PBezWQXIS>

on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question<sup>30</sup>.

On his last tour of Latin America, the Palestinian president, from Chile, visited Cuba as a sign of our country's solidarity with Palestine. The President of the State of Palestine and the Executive Committee of the Organization for the Liberation of Palestine, Hon. Mr. Mahmud Abbas<sup>31</sup> was in Havana from May 10 to 12, 2018 to carry out a broad program of activities including official talks with Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel, who ratified Cuba's support for Palestine and repudiated the unilateral US President Donald Trump's declaration of the Palestinian city of Al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of the Israeli regime.

The Cuban leader also defended the creation of an independent State of Palestine, according to the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as the capital. For his part, Mahmoud Abbas thanked Havana for the support of the Palestinian cause and granted his Cuban counterpart "The Great Necklace of the State of Palestine", the highest decoration granted to foreign personalities<sup>32</sup>. This visit was a sample of the excellent bilateral relations between the two countries<sup>33</sup>.

With regard to the latest events in the Gaza Strip, the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs demanded that the UN Security Council stop the Israeli aggression against the Palestinians. The Director General of Bilateral Affairs of the MINREX, Emilio Lozada García, on behalf of the Cuban Foreign Ministry, repudiated the new wave of violence by Israel against the Palestinian people: "We express the strongest condemnation of the new and criminal aggression by the Israeli Army against the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip". According to the official, it was a brutal act, which constituted a serious and flagrant violation of the Charter of the UN and International Humanitarian Law<sup>34</sup>.

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30 See: *Rechaza Cuba declaración de Jerusalén como capital de Israel ante la ONU*. Cuba Debate, 22 diciembre 2017. Available in: <http://www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2017/12/22/rechaza-cuba-declaracion-de-jerusalen-como-capital-de-israel-ante-la-onu/#.W7PALjWQxis>

31 His last stay in Cuba occurred in September 2009. On this occasion he met with the President Raul Castro and attended the signing of three agreements in the areas of education, culture and sports.

32 See: *Visitará Cuba Presidente de Palestina*. La Habana, Cuba, 7 de mayo de 2018. Available in: <https://www.hispantv.com/noticias/cuba/376890/palestina-jerusalen-eeuu-capital-canel-abbas>

33 See: *El líder palestino Mahmud Abbas llega a Cuba para reunirse con Díaz-Canel*. EFE, La Habana, 11 de mayo de 2018. Available in: <https://www.efe.com/efe/america/politica/el-lider-palestino-mahmud-abas-llega-a-cuba-para-reunirse-con-diaz-canel/200000353612440>

34 See: *Cuba se pronuncia contra la nueva escalada de violencia de Israel en Gaza*. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores (MINREX), 3 abril 2018. Available in: <http://www.cubadebate.cu/>

Cuba will continue to support a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on a Two-State solution, which allows the Palestinians the right to self-determination and to have an independent and sovereign State, with its capital in East Jerusalem and the pre-1967 borders.

## Final Remarks

The Israeli Zionist regime has maintained its positions against the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, has encouraged the construction of settlements of Jewish settlers in the West Bank, has opposed the return of Palestinian refugees and has violated all the resolutions that have been adopted in the General Assembly in favor of Palestine. Therefore, the conflict continues in several dimensions: the question related to the future of Jerusalem, the definition of the borders and lands on which the Palestinian State would be established, the illegality of the Jewish settlements in the lands systematically usurped by Israel, the situation of the Palestinian refugees and their right to return to their lands.

In this context, the so-called “deal of the century” proposed by the Republican administration of Donald Trump, comes to consolidate the positions of Israel on these topics and buries the possibility of the creation of the Palestinian state in the terms they have historically demanded. This has caused that the relations between the Palestinian authorities and the US government, being at their most critical point due to the unilateral actions and pressure coming from the Trump administration.

At the same time, tensions with Israel and repressive actions by the Israeli military at the checkpoints in the West Bank and in the border areas with the Gaza Strip have increased substantially. The Israeli army has continually used snipers along the border fences to suppress demonstrations by Palestinian civilians, establishing areas of no access for them. The violence with which the Zionists have acted violates international norms and human rights, in the face of the complicity of the United States and its European allies.

Therefore, the death of civilians without legal cause, the expulsion of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories, the illegal appropriation of their lands, the demolition of their homes and Israel’s policy of “arbitrary arrests” have been maintained. These facts have been evidenced after the publication of images in the social networks showing how the police hit

and throw tear gas from drones against the Palestinian demonstrators. The denunciations of Palestine against Israel before the ICC have not generated a convincing response of condemnation to these facts. Palestinian leaders have made it clear that they no longer see the United States as a neutral mediator in the conflict with Israel. Palestinian officials froze all contact with the US government since President Trump recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel by the end of 2017.

Undoubtedly, the impulse of "peace" led by the United States will be frustrated by the convictions and the commitment of the ANP with its people, in demand of the creation of the Palestinian State, as foreseen in the 1993 and 1995 Oslo Accords. This is essential, to continue demanding that Israel freeze its settlement policy as a precondition for resuming peace talks, freeing Palestinian prisoners prior to the Oslo process and offering guarantees on the right of Palestinians to return to their lands and preserve their history and national identity.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This article seeks to analyze the turn of US foreign policy, following the election of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the United States, with regard to Palestine and the imperialist interests in the region, investigate this new deal of the century to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It then intends to examine US pressures on Latin American countries due to their responses to the agreement and their relations with the “State of Israel” and with the Palestinian National Authority.

## **KEYWORDS**

Deal of the Century; Israeli–Palestinian Conflict, Latin America.

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