

Mahmoud Abbas Plans to Ask Biden to Move Embassy Back to Tel Aviv

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Mahmoud Abbas is planning to ask Joe Biden to move the American embassy back to Tel Aviv from Jerusalem. The request has no chance of being granted; Biden has already said that while he would not have moved the Embassy himself, he will not now move it out of Jerusalem.. But Abbas figures that when he's turned down, Biden will be snookered into thinking he now owes Abbas something. The report on Mahmoud Abbas' pressing request is here: "Report: Abbas Plans to Ask Biden to Return US Embassy to Tel Aviv," [i24 News](#), November 8, 2020:

Ramallah is planning to ask President-elect Joe Biden to immediately relocate the US embassy in Jerusalem back to Tel Aviv and rescind the Trump administration's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital...

Citing Palestinian Authority senior adviser Nabil Shaath, the Hebrew-language daily said that President Mahmoud Abbas has already sent covert communications to Biden stating that he is willing to return to US-brokered peace talks with Israel...

Moreover, Shaath said that his government will demand the United States reopen the Palestinian diplomatic mission in Washington, which has been shuttered since 2018 and renew American aid to Ramallah via the United Nations refugee agency UNRWA.

My, how the PA's cup of demands runneth over. Abbas and his cronies apparently think they would be doing the Americans a great favor by deigning to return to peace – or “peace” – talks with Israel, and that they can set all sorts of conditions beforehand. They “will demand” that the Americans reopen the PLO office in Washington; they “will demand” that the new administration ignore the past four years of American discussions with both Israel and the PA, and return to where the talks “left off” during the deeply anti-Israel Obama Administration; they “will demand” that the Americans send money to the PA in Ramallah, where President-For-Life Mahmoud Abbas will be waiting to take his customary cut, via UNRWA. It would be nice to think that the Americans will ignore all those outrageous demands. Unfortunately, the Biden Administration had already said it would do all those things – and said it even before the PA issued its demands. When it comes to the Palestinians, our media-proclaimed president-elect is eager to please.

On Sunday, Abbas extended his congratulations to Biden following his election victory over US President Donald Trump, saying he was looking forward to working with the new administration “to strengthen the Palestinian-American relations and to achieve freedom, independence, justice, and dignity for our people, as well as to work for peace, stability and security for all in our region and the world.”

“Freedom, independence, justice, and dignity” – yes, aren’t those the very words that come to mind when you think of the PA and Hamas? The “freedom” of the Palestinian leaders to rob their people blind. The “independence” that comes with living off foreign aid for your entire existence. The “justice” that lands any Palestinians critical of their corrupt leaders in jail. The “dignity” that results from being permanently on the international dole and, with begging bowl in hand, constantly asking for more.

Abbas’ message, however, was only delivered some 15 hours after Biden was declared president and most world leaders had sent their congratulations.

Given how elated the Palestinians were with Biden’s victory, it’s curious that Abbas waited so long to congratulate Biden. Perhaps he and his cronies were busy formulating, as part of their congratulatory statement, those non-negotiable demands that need to be met before they will agree to return to American-brokered talks with Israel.

Biden has a strange record on the subject of the American Embassy move to Jerusalem. He was an enthusiastic backer of the Jerusalem Embassy Act that Congress passed in 1995; the vote in the Senate was 95-3 in favor. Yet in the quarter-century since, he did not object when Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama invoked a six-month waiver of the application of the law, and reissued the waiver every six months on “national security” grounds. In April of this year, as a candidate in the Democratic primary, **Biden said that the U.S. Embassy in Israel would remain in Jerusalem if he’s elected, even as he called President Donald Trump’s decision to move the diplomatic base from Tel Aviv “short-sighted and frivolous.”**

Why did the embassy move, that Biden had supported with such ardor in 1995, now seem to him in 2020 to be “short-sighted”

and “frivolous”? It was neither of those things. The Embassy move was carefully meditated by Donald Trump and his Middle East advisers, to take Jerusalem permanently off the table of negotiations. Trump, unlike his three predecessors, was courageous enough, “far-sighted” enough, and serious (not a bit “frivolous”) enough, to right a historic wrong. Jerusalem had been the capital of the Jewish people for 3000 years. In 1995 both houses of Congress, representing the will of the American people, voted overwhelmingly to move the American Embassy to Jerusalem. President Trump, instead of doing as Clinton, Bush, and Obama had repeatedly done, by finding excuses (those “six-month waivers”) that allowed them to slither away from their duty to implement the Jerusalem Embassy Act, Trump went ahead and moved the Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. He had been warned by political cassettes that all hell would break loose in the Muslim world, but he ignored them. And he was right: there were a handful of very small and very brief demonstrations and then...nothing.

When Joe Biden voted for the Jerusalem Embassy Act in 1995, he apparently did not think he was being “short-sighted” or “frivolous,” nor did he think that of the other 94 Senators who voted to support the bill. What has happened since to change his mind? Joe Biden needs to explain why moving the Embassy was an excellent idea in 1995 but turned out to be “short-sighted” and “frivolous” in 2020. Or was it simply the case that Joe Biden could not stand to credit Donald Trump for finally doing the right thing, when Clinton and Bush had been too afraid of the Arab reaction, and Obama had been too hostile to Israel, to do so?

There’s another reason why Abbas is asking for Biden to move the embassy back to Tel Aviv, knowing that it won’t happen. He calculates that in turning down his request, Biden will then feel obligated, by way of recompense, to do something to please the *rais* in Ramallah. And in that calculation Abbas may, unfortunately, be right.

First published in