

Phares prediction on US embassy move to Jerusalem vindicated one year later

by John Hajjar



As with many previous projections he has announced, many were criticized before being vindicated with time. Dr Walid Phares, a noted Middle East expert who served as an advisor to Mitt Romney and Donald Trump and has been a Transatlantic coordinator for almost a decade, was asked last November immediately after the election if the new Administration will immediately move the US embassy from Tel Aviv. Seasoned analyst and with deep understanding on how things evolve in real geopolitical life, Phares told BBC few hours after Trump won the election, that while the new Administration will move in that direction it will work on creating a minimal consensus to help the move be achievable. In the following hours and days Phares comment was cited by CNN and later criticized by Tovah Lazarof, a writer at the Jerusalem Post. (<http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Trump-advisors-divided-over-moving-US-embassy-to-Jerusalem-472368>)

Lazarof and a number of Israeli left wing bloggers, as well as CNN and US based news sites including the New York Times, presented Phares as an advisor who doesn't follow the line adopted by the candidate. Their real goal was to discredit the savvy foreign policy advisor in the eyes of the Transition, and thus block him from being appointed to a position in the forthcoming Administration. Phares was lambasted by pro Iranian and Muslim Brotherhood voices for weeks and months. Another left wing writer at the Jerusalem Post wrote a hit piece against the expert trying to smear his past years in his ancestral homeland, Lebanon. A piece fully discredited by a top former Israeli official who had the Lebanon file under his hand in the 1980s. Regardless, the Lazarof piece aimed at portraying Phares as unable to predict the moves by the next President. The dominant expectation was that a President Trump would move the embassy immediately, after inauguration. But Phares predicted otherwise, and he was right.

Almost one year later this October, the expert was vindicated. In an interview with TBN, President Trump explained that he wants to achieve something in the Peace Process before he moves the embassy. Almost word to word of what Phares had told many Arab media in the months following the election.

The Times of Israel writes this week: "U.S. President Donald Trump said Saturday he will not consider moving the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem until an Israeli-Palestinian peace plan his administration is working on is given a chance to succeed. Appearing on a show hosted by former Arkansan Governor Mike Huckabee on the TBN network, Trump said a decision on moving the embassy would be made "in the not too distant future," but also indicated it would have to wait for the results of a nascent peace proposal being formulated by the U.S."

A year earlier The Jerusalem Post wrote under the title 'Will Trump move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem?' that "Advisors of President-elect Donald Trump are divided over the

question of whether the campaign pledge to move the United States embassy to Jerusalem would now be fulfilled.” The Post quoted Phares from BBC stating:

“Many prime ministers of Israel have that close to their heart. Many presidents of the US have committed to do that, and he [Trump] said as well he would do that,” advisor Walid Phares said. Then he added a caveat to the pledge..“But he [Trump] would do that in consensus,” Phares said. He issued the statement in an interview with BBC radio that was widely publicized by CNN on Thursday.

“The other thing he has said that we need to pay attention to; he is ready and he will immediately move to try to solve the problem between Palestinians and Israelis, something lingering for many years. It won’t be impossible for him to broker a deal between Israelis and Palestinians, at least he is going to go in that direction and not waste eight years, or at least four years for now, not doing anything for Palestinians and Israelis,” Phares said”

Nothing from what Phares told BBC few hours after election, and repeated to Arab media for months, didn’t actually happen. He simply analyzed the facts: That US and Israel leaders want to see this move occur but reality on the ground will compel the new Administration to try to achieve an advance in the Peace Process as a context to the embassy move. It wasn’t based on predictive capacities but on rational analysis as available at the time. It wasn’t Phares opinion but his assessment of how matters would evolve. As for when he projected the Arab Spring in 2010 before it happened in 2011, Phares was using logical and carefully analyzed data to project what is actually possible and feasible over the following year. The President statement to TBN simply confirmed Phares analysis.

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