

The Insubmissive Infidel, Or, Just A Jot About Jerusalem

by Hugh Fitzgerald

“Palestinian” leader Mahmoud Abbas’ advisor on religion, one Mahmoud Al-Habbash, has declared that a move of the American embassy to Jerusalem by the Trump administration would constitute **“a declaration of war on all Muslims,”** and then threatened: **“This will not pass in silence.”** He was not alone. A half-dozen other “Palestinian” leaders chimed in with similar threats, claiming that if **“America recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of the Jews,”** then America will have declared **“a new war against the Palestinians and also against the Arabs and the Muslims.”**

Many American officials, including several former ambassadors to Israel, are also against the move. They claim it will cause “instability” (as if the Muslim Middle East were not already the most unstable region in the world today), and “harm” Israel’s budding relations behind-the-scenes with some in the Arab world (as if Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia would deprive themselves of the covert help Israel gives them against common enemies, including the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran). More interesting is that “Palestinians” in East Jerusalem, some reports suggest, appear to be **“[apathetic](#)”** about the possible U.S. Embassy move. Of course, the “Palestinian” leaders need to show they are doing something, earning their corrupt keep, and one way is to whip up sentiment against the move, even if locally it hardly matters to many “Palestinians,” who have other, more basic concerns, to worry about.

At this point, for Trump to back down from what he repeatedly said he would do, both during the campaign and after his election, would be taken by many Arabs and Muslims as a sign that their threats work, even with someone like Trump, who

prides himself on his toughness. And such a victory would embolden the Arabs and Muslims to attempt more such victories through threat, and not only on matters involving Israel, but within Western Europe, too. Imagine, for example, that flush with victory on the Jerusalem issue (and one can almost hear the cries and ululations of triumph if Trump yields, and announces that he's "putting off" indefinitely the Embassy move), Muslims decided to threaten Dutch voters that "if you elect Geert Wilders we will boycott Dutch goods" (just like the boycott of Danish products in 2006, to punish Denmark for publication of the Muhammad cartoons), or to make a similar threat to French voters about electing Marine Le Pen: "we'll boycott French goods, we won't visit Paris." Or Muslim threats against any European country that passes measures deemed "anti-Islam" – everything from banning the niqab to serving pork in school lunches, to requiring Muslim girls to attend swimming classes with boys. Could, would European politicians and voters allow themselves to be bullied in such a manner? Of course they could; pusillanimity is a universal problem.

But if Trump stands firm, that should help stiffen the backbone of those Europeans who are rightly alarmed about Islam but – with so much surrender in the air – need encouragement. Trump's refusal to kowtow will give them something to emulate. But if he gives in on the Jerusalem embassy move, it makes more likely both that other threats will be made by Muslims, their appetites whetted, against the West, and that the demoralization of the Western world – already evident in such craven leaders as Theresa May and Angela Merkel – will increase. The Embassy move may seem to be a matter *only* about Jerusalem, but it has become much more: a test of wills between the West (as represented by the United States) and a hostile Muslim world which, maddeningly, threatens even as it relies on the West for its economic and, in some cases, political survival. Furthermore, if Trump were to declare that he needed a "waiver on national security grounds" to the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, just like his

three predecessors, that would no doubt mean more than just a reversal of *his* policy; it would make it unlikely that any of his successors would try to move the Embassy. Following such a humiliating retreat by Trump, what future president would expend political capital trying to reverse course yet again? The American Embassy would remain in Tel Aviv, with any hope of its being moved to Jerusalem permanently extinguished.

A lot, then, is at stake.

In the first, and obvious, place, such a retreat would do violence to history and the truth. The connection of the Jewish people to Jerusalem, as their "eternal capital," is not to be undone by votes in that most corrupt and corrupting of institutions, the U.N., where a powerful Muslim bloc holds sway. The Muslim connection to Jerusalem is a matter of faith, not history: Jerusalem is "holy" to Muslims because Muhammad supposedly ascended into Heaven on his winged steed Al-Buraq, from the "farthest mosque" (Al-Masjid al-Aqsa) located on the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount). You have to be a Muslim to believe the story about Muhammad's Night Journey. You do not have to be Jewish, however, to know that Jerusalem was the capital of the Jews for thousands of years, that King David and King Solomon really did exist, that the Western Wall and Temple Mount and the cemetery on the Mount of Olives all testify to the ancient Jewish presence, that there is considerable archeological evidence for both the First and Second Temples, and that Jerusalem is mentioned 349 times in the Jewish Bible (but not mentioned once in the Qur'an). The Jewish connection to Jerusalem is a matter, then, of history, not of faith. Nor should the threats of Arabs and Muslims be allowed to sever that connection simply because they have become past masters at rewriting history, as recently demonstrated at UNESCO, in a resolution where the Muslim connection to Jerusalem was emphasized and the Jewish link to the Temple Mount was not even mentioned.

When Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama all invoked

considerations of national security to claim a waiver from implementing the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, they were demonstrating their fear of what they assumed might happen, without closely examining what the Arabs could actually do; none was willing to call what can reasonably be seen as the Muslim Arab bluff. And those who now counsel Trump not to fulfill his campaign pledge on the Embassy move – he should be cautious, he should be prudent, he should rock no boats, he should worry more about the Arab and Muslim reaction – are guilty of the same.

For what exactly could Muslims do to the United States, as a response to the Embassy being moved, that they are not already doing, or are trying to do? There have been more than 30,000 separate terrorist attacks by Muslims since 2001, all over the world. The only reason that total is not even higher is that Western security services have grown in their effectiveness, not because Muslims have decided they need to wait for a specific “reason” to attack. No particular act by Infidels is necessary to provoke such attacks; it is enough that Infidels remain Infidels.

If Trump were to do what he promised to do, it would give the world of cautious diplomacy a salutary shock. It would show up the cowardice of previous presidents. It would be a declaration of independence from, and well-deserved expression of contempt for, the U.N. Of course, such a move would be met with plenty of outrage, both real and feigned, but also with support from such anti-Islamic leaders in Europe as Geert Wilders and even, possibly, Marine Le Pen, by way of demonstrating that they, too, will not be subject to Muslim blackmail. Should Wilders win, in particular, and if Trump has moved the Embassy to Jerusalem by then, it would not be surprising if the Dutch leader were to follow suit. Then one hopes – “first a little, thence to more” – others will find out it isn’t so dangerous a move after all. And having one’s embassy in Jerusalem will take on symbolic significance, a way

of demonstrating not just a respect for history, but that the West will no longer allow itself to be cowed by Muslims – either in foreign or domestic policy.

What dire threats can the “Palestinians” follow through on? Will they refuse to accept the hundreds of millions of dollars they receive each year in American aid? Let them. Can they punish our European allies, by refusing the billions they receive from them? That should be fine with us *and* the Europeans. The “Palestinians” can huff and they can puff, but the only house they will blow down is their own. They are at this point no longer the center of Arab interest; many Arab leaders have had their fill of the “whining Palestinians,” and having become weary of their “cause,” are more concerned with all the serious threats – such as the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda, the Muslim Brotherhood and, especially, Iran – to their own security.

What about the other Arabs? That means, above all, Saudi Arabia. Will the Saudis cease to pay for the tens of thousands of students they have enrolled in American colleges? Those student numbers have already been steadily [reduced over the last few years](#) due to a huge budget deficit, and if the Saudi government reduces those numbers still further, that will reflect budget belt-tightening, not an attempt to punish the United States, which for Saudi Arabia remains the one indispensable country. When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, American airmen promptly arrived in Saudi Arabia to reassure the Saudis. The Americans are still there, the ultimate guarantor of Saudi security. There have been many reports, too, about a covert alliance with Israel, that supplies Saudi Arabia with intelligence on Iran. The Saudis now fear most an aggressive Iran threatening them through proxy wars, as it helps the Shi’as in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon. Iran might even, the Saudis fear, sow open revolt among the Shi’a in the oil-bearing Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. While the “Palestinians” like to think that they will forever remain the

focus of Arab foreign policy (as it undoubtedly once was), the permanent cynosure of all Muslim eyes, and assume their cause will always come first, there is reason to believe they have an exaggerated sense of their importance, for the Arabs are now preoccupied with many other conflicts and threats to their well-being. How important is this Embassy move for Saudi Arabia (with Israel now an ally in the war against Iran), compared to the Iranian presence that appears to encircle it? Or the threats from the Islamic State, Al Qaeda, and the Muslim Brotherhood, not just to the Saudis but to many of their neighbors in the cauldron of the Middle East?

And what about the threat that the Saudis might sell off \$750 billion in American assets if the Embassy is moved, a threat that has been made before to halt other initiatives, but never carried out? The Saudis said, for example, they would sell those assets if Congress passed a bill giving the families of 9/11 victims the ability to sue Saudi Arabia. Congress not only passed the bill, but when Obama vetoed it, [passed it a second time](#) by overriding the veto.

And what did Saudi Arabia do? It did nothing at all; it kept its American investments; its bluff was called. And if it were to make the same threat over the Embassy move, and even if it made good on the threat, many economists now believe, even if it did sell off those American assets, such a move would now have scarcely any effect on the U.S. economy, with its 18 trillion-dollar GDP, with \$500 billion traded daily in the bond market alone, but might well devastate the Saudis. As one economist [summed up](#) the Saudi quandary:

They can sell the liquid assets fairly quickly – however moving large volumes will imply they will get a haircut, and someone else will make a nice profit. There would be a blip or two in the various indices but no real impact. The more real concern for the Saudis would be where to put that money – euros? rubles? rupees? gold?

For the not so liquid assets – they would need to have a massive firesale. A lot of people will make a killing. And there will be a supply glut in that market. But it would be fairly localized. And they probably won't be able to liquidate completely.

So net result – they might be able to pull out some portion. Some portion will be frozen. And another portion will end up as someone else's profit.

None of the economists appear to believe that any economic damage would be inflicted on the American economy. [The consensus](#) is that Saudi Arabia would be inflicting economic damage only on itself. That the Saudis refused to go through with their threatened sale of assets when Congress passed – twice – a bill allowing 9/11 families to sue the Saudis shows that they understand this, but hope that those they threaten do not.

The final worry is, of course, about oil. Could the Saudis start cutting off oil supplies, as in 1973? No, they could not. In the first place, in 1973 the oil market was the tightest it had ever been, so tight that OPEC managed to make the quadrupling of oil prices stick. Now market conditions are completely different. There is plenty of oil worldwide, including shale oil, for which effective new methods of extraction have been found. And there are plenty of non-oil sources of energy, which is even more worrisome for oil producers. We hear constantly of new advances in the efficiency of electric cars, and of solar collectors, and other technical achievements that put the oil market under constant downward pressure. The Saudis cannot be cavalier with customers; they must hold on to any part of the American oil market they can. And since oil is fungible, were hotter heads to prevail, and the Saudis decided to strike back at the U.S. for its embassy move by ceasing to sell to the Americans, they would then have to sell that oil elsewhere. To win a customer

away from its current supplier would require the Saudis to offer a lower oil price. Should they succeed, that other supplier whom they have replaced will now be eager to sell its oil in the market that has just lost its Saudi supplier – that is, the United States. Lower revenues for the Saudis, no change for the Americans.

A production cut, on the other hand, would cause the price of oil to rise. More American shale oil would become economic to extract, the price of alternative sources of energy – wind and solar and nuclear – would become steadily more competitive following the oil price rise. The Saudis would bear the total brunt if they were the only ones to cut production. And Saudi Arabia is not quite as fabulously rich as it was in the past. Saudi Arabia has been burning through its cash, at a rate close to \$100 billion in each of the last two years, because of the oil glut (the Saudis derive 92% of their income from oil); it needs all the revenue it can get. It's not likely to cut production, given its current needs, in order to make a doubtful political point. Iran is much more on its mind, and the Saudis need both money for armaments, and American security guarantees against Iran that cannot any longer be counted on as a given.

Donald Trump's words about Saudi Arabia during the campaign must have given Riyadh pause. He said that if elected, **he might halt purchases of oil from Saudi Arabia** and other Arab allies unless they commit ground troops to the fight against the Islamic State or **"substantially reimburse"** the United States for combating the militant group, which threatens their stability. And he showed his keen awareness of just who needs whom in the relationship: **"If Saudi Arabia was without the cloak of American protection, I don't think it would be around."**

That must have disturbed the Saudis, who have been able to push their weight around Washington ever since OPEC's rise in 1973, by acting as if it is the United States that is in

desperate need of Saudi Arabia. And now, following Congressional passage of the bill to allow 9/11 families to sue the Saudis that the Kingdom (and the Obama administration) had tried hard to stop, comes Donald Trump, with words that rattled Riyadh. This is no time for the Saudis to annoy the Americans. The Saudis are not fools, and they will not sacrifice themselves, economically or in security matters, to make a point for the tiresome "Palestinians."

Other Muslim states might wish to punish the American government for recognizing a historical truth in moving its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. But would they really do something beyond verbal menacing? What else can they do? Sever relations? Not accept our surplus wheat? Refuse the weapons we supply to so many of them? Would Jordan want to forgo the \$1.6 billion this year in American aid, without which the country would stagger, if not collapse? Or Egypt its \$1.5 billion, or Afghanistan its \$1.1 billion, or Pakistan its nearly \$1 billion? What threats could they carry out, without fearing American retaliation? For Trump, as we all know, is no fan either of foreign aid, or of Islam, and would be delighted to see a half dozen Muslim countries "punish" us by breaking off relations, thereby giving him all the excuse he needs to end that aid. The leaders of those countries know perfectly well how much they need American aid, and how eager Trump is to cut it off. They won't be taking any chances on their own well-being, just to please the likes of Mahmoud Abbas and Saeb Erekat.

Trump should call the bluff of the assorted "Palestinians" threatening all manner of mayhem. The fearful and the faint have had their moment in the sun. Now it's time to try the truth: Jerusalem is Israel's capital. The rewriters of history must not prevail. The American Embassy belongs in Jerusalem. Just make the move, announcing it laconically and after the fact, without fanfare and without deigning to take notice either of the threats from all those mahmoud-dabbashes or of

the feelgood fantasies of Pope Francis. After the expected period of Muslim agitation and even, from Gaza and Ramallah, fabricated hysteria, once the Embassy is moved things will quiet down, and with none of those dire Muslim threats having come to pass, the world will go on pretty much as before, except that those who in Europe want a stronger campaign against the Muslim invasion of their countries – and their numbers are growing – will be heartened by, and no doubt wish to emulate, the no-nonsense approach taken in Washington. The mixture as before just hasn't been working. It is time to try something new, time to kiss the lips of unacquainted change.

First published in