



Written by [James Murphy](#) on November 19, 2019

Trump Reverses U.S. Policy on Israeli Settlements in West Bank, Angers Globalists

In a bombshell announcement on Monday, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo heralded a [new White House stance](#) on the extremely divisive issue of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank. Pompeo said that the United States will no longer view those settlements as “inconsistent with international law.”

“After carefully studying all sides of the legal debate ... the establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in the West Bank is not, per se, inconsistent with international law,” Pompeo said, citing President Ronald Reagan’s view that the settlements were not “inherently illegal.”



The move is not only a reversal of Obama era policies, but would seem to signal an end to U.S. adherence to a 1978 Carter-era State Department legal opinion that such settlements violated international law. Known as the Hansell Memorandum, the opinion stated that creating settlements in the West Bank is “inconsistent with international law” and also a violation of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

“Calling the establishment of civilian settlements inconsistent with international law has not advanced the cause of peace,” Pompeo said. “The hard truth is there will never be a judicial resolution to the conflict, and arguments about who is right and who is wrong as a matter of international law will not bring peace.”

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Since that 1978 opinion, no U.S. president has referred to the settlements as “illegal,” although some have labeled them an “obstacle to peace” or “illegitimate.” While the Trump administration didn’t go so far as to call the settlements “legal,” the announcement is a definite move in favor of Israel’s position on the settlements, at least as far as the United States is concerned.

Palestinians were understandably upset with the new U.S. view on those settlements. Saeb Erekat, the general secretary of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which negotiates on behalf of the Palestinians, attacked the Trump administration after Pompeo’s announcement.

“Once again, with this announcement, the Trump administration is demonstrating the extent to which it’s threatening the international system with its unceasing attempts to replace international law with the ‘law of the jungle,” Erekat said. “Henceforth, the international community must take all necessary measures to respond and deter this irresponsible U.S. behavior, which poses a threat to global stability, security and peace.”

The European Union was also quick to criticize the Trump administration’s new policy, quickly



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releasing a statement stating that their “position on Israeli policy in the occupied Palestinian territory is clear and remains unchanged: all settlement activity is illegal under international law and it erodes the viability of the two-state solution and the prospects for a lasting peace.” The EU also pressed “Israel to end all settlement activity, in line with its obligations as an occupying power.”

The United Nations itself has also weighed in, flatly rejecting the new policy of the United States. “We continue to follow the long-standing position of the U.N. that Israeli settlements are in breach of international law,” said UN human rights spokesman Rupert Colville.

“A change in the policy position of one state does not modify existing international law nor its interpretation by the International Court of Justice and the Security Council.”

So, we can expect a pro-forma United Nations condemnation soon.

On the other hand, embattled Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed the new policy: “Today, the United States adopted an important policy that rights a historical wrong when the Trump administration clearly rejected the false claim that Israeli settlements in Judea and Samaria are inherently illegal under international law.”

Netanyahu further welcomed Pompeo’s assertion that the settlement issue belongs in the hands of Israeli courts — not in the hands of the globalists at the UN: “Israel’s legal system, which has proven itself fully capable of addressing legal questions relating to the settlements, is the appropriate place for these matters to be adjudicated — not biased international forums that pay no attention to history or facts.”

This announcement is only the latest in a series of pro-Israel measures taken during the Trump administration. In December of 2017, Trump announced that the United States was formally recognizing [Jerusalem as the capital](#) of the country, despite the United Nations considering the action “null and void” shortly after the initial announcement. President Trump chose not to listen to the UN in that case, and in May of 2018, the U.S. embassy officially opened in Jerusalem.

Then, in March of this year, Trump officially recognized Israel’s sovereignty over the disputed [Golan Heights](#), which Israel seized during the Six Day War in 1967 when Israel was attacked by the combined forces of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq. Israel responded by naming one of the towns in the area Trump Heights in appreciation.

Photo of Israeli West Bank settlement of Ariel: AP Images

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