

**STATEMENT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES ON PRESIDENT TRUMP'S RECOGNITION OF
JERUSALEM AS THE CAPITAL OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL****DECEMBER 8, 2017**

The South African Council of Churches joins the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, the World Methodist Council, Pope Francis and the wider international Community in voicing profound concern over President Trump's ill-advised declaration that Jerusalem is henceforth the Israeli capital: a shocking, monumental geopolitical move that could trigger deep, far-reaching and cataclysmic repercussions that could bring in unimaginable upheaval and instability in the already volatile Middle East region.

President Trump officially recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital – one of the most contentious issues at the heart of the decades long Israeli-Palestinian conflict because the Palestinians also lay claim to East Jerusalem as their own capital. Trump's pronouncement flagrantly flouts UN resolutions that have never recognised Jerusalem as an exclusively Israeli capital because of its historical importance to two peoples and three religions. Because the question of Jerusalem is part of the agenda for the final resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; potentially, this ill-timed political announcement undermines and unravels years of precarious and occasionally intractable peace talks, attempted by various American Administrations since the Six- Day war in 1967, in one fell swoop.

It's an open secret that Jerusalem is a city valued by both the Israelis and Palestinians and it is unthinkable for the Palestinians that their capital could be anywhere other than Jerusalem. By unilaterally annexing and declaring it to exclusively belong to the Israelis, America has recklessly sought to invoke further strife and discord. It runs the risk of unleashing yet another Intifada that Hamas is now calling for.

We applaud the more than 150 nations who, in deference to the UN resolutions, have maintained diplomatic missions in Tel Aviv rather than endorse Israel's belligerent sovereignty over Jerusalem, even in the wake of Trump's utterances.

As the SACC, we deem Trump's actions as ill-advised, with a potential to exacerbate the already immense pain and suffering of Palestinians in the occupied territories. Furthermore, this is a violation of the rights and the human dignity of the people of the region.

We continue to implore the international community that vociferously condemned Apartheid to open its eyes to the pain and suffering of Palestinians in the occupied areas and urge Israel and the USA to refrain from legitimizing and characterizing Jerusalem as belonging exclusively to the State of Israel. This could destroy the tenuous ceasefire which has held hitherto and may compromise all the political progress gained through negotiations by



President Arafat and Prime Minister Rabin, who paid the ultimate price for their pursuit of a two-state solution.

We maintain that the Israeli occupation of Palestine is not only immoral, but also illegal and irrational according to International Law and that the Palestinians have as much right to Jerusalem as Israel, if not more.

We stand in solidarity with the Palestinians at this time even as we pray for restraint and a political solution that will be of benefit to the majority reinforced by lasting peace and seeking justice for all.

As we have stated in previous statements, our hope remains steadfast, not because of our strength, but because of Christ, who wept over Jerusalem. The suffering and the oppression of Palestinian people is transient and the love of God will turn hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, in Israel, Palestine and across the world. The people of Palestine will move from the darkness of oppression to the light of freedom with no preconditions to self-determination.

Our prayer is that God intervenes to offer both Israelis and Palestinians a future in which they live together in peace with full and equal rights. We call on our people to stand in solidarity with those who suffer and to pray and to work for a just peace in the Holy Land.

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