

# FULL TEXT: U.S. Vice President Mike Pence's Speech at Israel's Knesset

'In the weeks ahead, our administration will advance its plan to open the United States Embassy in Jerusalem, and that United States Embassy will open before the end of next year'

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*Read the full address by U.S. Vice President [Mike Pence at the Knesset in Jerusalem](#) on Monday. During his speech, he was [interrupted by Israeli Arab lawmakers](#) in protest of the address.*

President Rivlin, [Prime Minister Netanyahu](#), Speaker Edelstein, Leader Herzog, members of the Knesset, justices of the Supreme Court, citizens of Israel – (applause) – it is deeply humbling for me to stand before this vibrant democracy – (applause) – to have the great honor to address this Knesset, the first vice president of the United States to be afforded that privilege here in Jerusalem, the capital of the State of Israel. (Applause.)

And I bring greetings from a leader who has done more to bring our two great countries closer together than any president in the past 70 years – the 45th president of the United States of America, [President Donald Trump](#). (Applause.)

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Through a 2,000-year exile, the longest of any people, anywhere, through conquests and expulsions, inquisitions and pogroms, the Jewish people held on to this promise, and they held onto it through the longest and darkest of nights. A night that Elie Wiesel proclaimed “seven times sealed.” A night that transformed the small faces of children into smoke under a silent sky. A night that consumed the faith of so many and that challenges the faith of so many still.

And [Tuesday], when I stand with my wife at Yad Vashem to honor the 6 million Jewish martyrs of the Holocaust, we will marvel at the faith and resilience of your people, who just three years after walking beneath the shadow of death, rose up from the ashes to resurrect

yourselves, to reclaim a Jewish future and to rebuild the Jewish state. (Applause.)

And this April, we will mark the day when the Jewish people answered that ancient question – can a country be born in a day, can a nation be born in a moment? – as the State of Israel celebrates the 70th anniversary of its birth. (Applause.)

As you prepare to commemorate this historic milestone, I say, along with the good people of Israel, here and around the world:  
*Shehecheyanu, v'kiyimanu, v'higiyanu la'z'man ha'zeh.* (Applause.)

Seventy years ago, the United States was proud to be the first nation in the world to recognize the State of Israel. But as you well know, the work we began on that day was left unfinished, for while the United States recognized your nation, one administration after another refused to recognize your capital.

But just last month, President Donald Trump made history. He righted a 70-year wrong; he kept his word to the American people when he announced that the [United States of America will finally acknowledge Jerusalem is Israel's capital.](#) (Applause.)

The Jewish people's unbreakable bond to this sacred city reaches back more than 3,000 years. It was here, in Jerusalem, on Mount Moriah that Abraham offered his son, Isaac, and was credited with righteousness for his faith in God.

It was here, in Jerusalem, that King David consecrated the capital of the Kingdom of Israel. And since its rebirth, the modern State of Israel has called this city the seat of its government.

Jerusalem is Israel's capital. And, as such, President Trump has directed the State Department to immediately begin preparations to move the United States Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. (Applause.) In the weeks ahead, our administration will advance its plan to open the United States Embassy in Jerusalem, and that United States Embassy will open before the end of next year. (Applause.)

Our president made his decision, in his words, "in the best interests of the United States." But he also made it clear that we believe that his decision is in the best interests of peace. By finally recognizing

Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the United States has chosen fact over fiction. And fact is the only true foundation for a just and lasting peace.

Under President Trump, the United States of America remains fully committed to achieve a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. (Applause.)

In announcing his decision on Jerusalem, the president also called, in his words, "on all parties to maintain the status quo at Jerusalem's holy sites, including at the Temple Mount, also known as the Haram al-Sharif." And he made it clear that we're not taking a position on any final status issues, including the specific boundaries of the Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem or the resolution of contested borders.

And President Trump reaffirmed that, if both sides agree, the United States of America will support a two-state solution. (Applause.)

We know Israelis want peace, and we know that Israelis need no lectures on the price of war. The people of Israel know the terrible price all too well. Your prime minister knows that price. He himself was nearly killed in battle, and his beloved brother Yoni was killed while courageously leading the Entebbe hostage rescue 41 years ago.

And you, who know the price of war, know best what the blessings of peace can bring – to you, to your children and future generations.

The United States appreciates your government's declared willingness to resume direct peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. And today, we strongly urge the Palestinian leadership to return to the table. Peace can only come through dialogue. (Applause.)

Now, we recognize that peace will require compromise, but you can be confident in this: The United States of America will never compromise the safety and security of the State of Israel. (Applause.) Any peace agreement must guarantee Israel's ability to defend itself by itself.

Now, there are those who believe that the world can't change; that we're destined to engage in endless violence; that age-old conflicts can't be solved; and that hope itself is an illusion. But, my friends,

President Trump doesn't believe it. I don't believe it. And neither do you.

I stand here today in the city whose very name means peace. And [as] I stand here, I know that peace is possible because history records that Israel has made the very difficult decisions to achieve peace with its neighbors in the past.

Over the past two days, I've traveled to Egypt and Jordan, two nations with whom Israel has long enjoyed the fruits of peace. I spoke with America's great friends, President Al-Sissi of Egypt and King Abdullah of Jordan, about the courage of their predecessors who forged an end to conflict with Israel in their time.

And those two leaders prove every day that trust and confidence can be a reality among the great nations who call these ancient lands home.

In my time with those leaders, and with your prime minister, we discussed the remarkable transformation that is taking place across the Middle East today, and the need to forge a new era of cooperation in our day and age.

The winds of change can already be witnessed across the Middle East. Long-standing enemies are becoming partners. Old foes are finding new ground for cooperation. And the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael are coming together in common cause as never before.

Last year, in Saudi Arabia, President Trump addressed an unprecedented gathering of leaders from more than 50 nations at the Arab Islamic American Summit. He challenged the people of this region to work ever closer together, to recognize shared opportunities and to confront shared challenges. And the president urged all who call the Middle East their home to, in his words, "meet history's great test – [and] conquer extremism and vanquish the forces of terrorism together." (Applause.)

Radical Islamic terrorism knows no borders – targeting America, Israel, nations across the Middle East and the wider world. It respects no creed – stealing the lives of Jews, Christians and especially Muslims. And radical Islamic terrorism understands no reality other than brute force.

Together with our allies, we will continue to bring the full force of our might to drive radical Islamic terrorism from the face of the Earth.  
(Applause.)

I'm pleased to report that, thanks to the courage of our armed forces and our allies, at this very moment ISIS is on the run, their capital has fallen, their so-called caliphate has crumbled. And you can be assured we will not rest, we will not relent, until we hunt down and destroy ISIS at its source, so it can no longer threaten our people, our allies, or our very way of life. (Applause.)

Now, the United States and Israel have long stood together to confront the terrible evil of terrorism, and so we will continue. And across the Middle East, Arab leaders have responded, as well, to the president's call with unprecedented action to root out radicalism and prove the emptiness of its apocalyptic promises.

As President Trump made clear in Saudi Arabia, we will continue to stand with our allies and stand up to our enemies. We will work with all of our partners to starve, in his words, "terrorists of their territory, their funding and the false allure of their craven ideology."

We will also support faith leaders in this region and across the world, as they teach their disciples to practice love, not hate. And we will help persecuted peoples, who have suffered so much at the hands of ISIS and other terrorist groups.

To this end, the United States has redirected funding from ineffective relief efforts. And, for the first time, we are providing direct support to Christian and other religious minorities as they rebuild their communities after years of repression and war. (Applause.)

The United States has already committed more than \$110 million to assist Christian and other religious minorities across the wider Middle East. And we urge our allies – here in Israel, in Europe and across the world – to join us in this cause. Let's work together to restore the rich splendor of religious diversity across the Middle East, so that all faiths may once again flourish in the lands where they were born.  
(Applause.)

As we work to defeat the scourge of terrorism, and give aid to those who have suffered at its hands, we must also be resolved and vigilant to prevent old adversaries from gaining any new ground.

To that end, the United States will continue to work with Israel, and with nations across the world, to confront the leading state sponsor of terror – the Islamic Republic of Iran. (Applause.)

As the world has seen once again, the brutal regime in Iran is merely a brutal dictatorship that seeks to dominate its citizens and deny them of their most fundamental rights. History has proven, those who dominate their own people rarely stop there. And increasingly, we see Iran seeking to dominate the wider Arab world.

That dangerous regime sows chaos across the region. Last year alone, even as its citizens cried out for help with basic necessities, Iran devoted more than \$4 billion to malign activities in Syria, Lebanon and elsewhere across the region. It has supported terrorist groups that even now sit on Israel's doorstep. And worst of all, the Iranian regime has pursued a clandestine nuclear program, and at this very hour is developing advanced ballistic missiles.

Two-and-a-half years ago, the previous administration in America signed a deal with Iran that merely delays the day when that regime can acquire a nuclear weapon. The Iran nuclear deal is a disaster, and the United States of America will no longer certify this ill-conceived agreement. (Applause.)

At President Trump's direction, we're working to enact effective and lasting restraints on Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs. Earlier this month, the president waived sanctions on Iran to give the Congress and our European allies time to pass stronger measures. But as President Trump made clear, this is the last time.

Unless the Iran nuclear deal is fixed, President Trump has said the United States will withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal immediately. (Applause.)

Whatever the outcome of those negotiations, today I have a solemn promise to Israel, to all the Middle East and to the world: The United States of America will never allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon. (Applause.) Beyond the nuclear deal, we will also no longer

tolerate Iran's support of terrorism or its brutal attempts to suppress its own people.

Last year, our administration more than tripled the number of sanctions targeting Iran and its leaders. And just this month, the United States issued tough new sanctions on Iran.

But I have another message today – a better message – from the people of America to the proud and great people of Iran: We are your friends, and the day is coming when you will be free from the evil regime that suffocates your dreams and buries your hopes.

(Applause.) And when your day of liberation finally comes, we say to the good people of Iran, the friendship between our peoples will blossom once again. (Applause.)

While at times it may seem hard to see, those who call the Middle East their home have more that unites them than divides them – not only in common threats, but in the common hope for a future of security and prosperity and peace, and in the common ancestry of faith that runs throughout these very lands.

Nearly 4,000 years ago, a man left his home in Ur of the Chaldeans to travel here, to Israel. He ruled no empire, he wore no crown, he commanded no armies, he performed no miracles, delivered no prophecies, yet to him was promised “descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky.”

Today, Jews, Christians, and Muslims – more than half the population of the Earth, and nearly all the people of the Middle East – claim Abraham as their forefather in faith. Only steps from here, in the Old City of Jerusalem, we see the followers of these three great religions in constant contact with one another. And we see each faith come to life in new and renewed ways every day.

At the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, we see a Christian child receiving the gift of grace, in baptism. At the Western Wall, we see a young Jewish boy being bar-mitzvahed. And at the Haram al-Sharif, we see young Muslims, heads bowed in prayer.

In Jerusalem, we see all this and more. And so today, as I stand in Abraham's “Promised Land,” I believe that all who cherish freedom,

and seek a brighter future, should cast their eyes here to this place and marvel at what they behold.

How unlikely was Israel's birth; how more unlikely has been her survival. And how confounding, and against the odds, has been her thriving. You have turned the desert into a garden, scarcity into plenty, sickness into health, and you turned hope into a future.

Israel is like a tree that has grown deep roots in the soil of your forefathers, yet as it grows, it reaches ever closer to the heavens. And today and every day, the Jewish state of Israel, and all the Jewish people, bear witness to God's faithfulness, as well as your own.

It was the faith of the Jewish people that gathered the scattered fragments of a people and made them whole again; that took the language of the Bible and the landscape of the Psalms and made them live again. And it was faith that rebuilt the ruins of Jerusalem and made them strong again.

The miracle of Israel is an inspiration to the world. And the United States of America is proud to stand with Israel and her people, as allies and cherished friends. (Applause.)

And so we will "pray for the peace of Jerusalem," that "those who love you be secure," that "there be peace within your walls, and security in your citadels."

And we will work and strive for that brighter future where everyone who calls this ancient land their home shall sit "under their vine and fig tree, and none shall make them afraid."

With an unshakeable bond between our people, and our shared commitment to freedom, I say from my heart: May God bless the Jewish people, may God bless the State of Israel and all who call these lands their home, and may God continue to bless the United States of America. (Applause.)