

# Palestinians Move Against Trump's U.S. Embassy Transfer

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Palestinian leaders have called for Muslim and Christian worshipers across the Middle East to protest against plans by U.S. President-elect Donald Trump to transfer the American embassy the Israeli-occupied territories to al-Quds.

Mohammad Shtayyeh, a senior Palestinian official and Fatah central committee member, called for prayers at mosques throughout the Middle East on Friday as well as for churches to ring their bells in protest on Sunday.

“I think and we all think that moving the embassy to Jerusalem (al-Quds) is a dangerous step that will have dangerous consequences for the political track for our people and for our future aspirations and for the Muslim, Arab, Christian countries and people all over the world,” Shtayyeh told journalists in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

“We are not inciting violence. Ringing a church bell... is not a violent act. Calling for a prayer is not a violent act.”

Shtayyeh, who was speaking on behalf of the Palestinian leadership, said doing so would mean an “end to the two-state solution.”

The Palestinian leadership had been informed by diplomatic contacts that Trump could call for the move in his inauguration speech on January 20, Shtayyeh said.

Elsewhere in his remarks,



*U.S. President-elect Donald Trump (R) and David Friedman, Trump's possible nominee for ambassador to the occupied territories*

Shtayyeh said Palestinian leaders were considering whether to withdraw their recognition of the Zionist regime if Trump went ahead with the plan.

President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas has already written to Trump, urging him not to move the embassy while also calling it a “red line” that could jeopardize the so-called peace prospects.

In early December, U.S. President Barack Obama renewed a presidential waiver ordering the U.S. embassy in the occupied territories to remain in Tel Aviv,

despite pressure by Congress and the regime not to do so.

In September 2016, Trump, who was the Republican presidential nominee at the time, had promised Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he would “recognize Jerusalem [al-Quds] as the undivided capital of the state of Israel” if he emerged victorious in November presidential election.

Palestinians are seeking to create an independent state in the territories of the West Bank, East al-Quds and the Gaza Strip, with East al-Quds as its capital.

Over 230 illegal settlements have been constructed since the 1967 occupation of the Palestinian territories. The unauthorized structures have hampered attempts to establish peace in the Middle East.

In November 2012, the United Nations General Assembly voted to upgrade Palestine’s status from “non-member observer entity” to “non-member observer state” despite strong opposition from Israel.

Palestine’s flag was hoisted for the first time at the UN Headquarters in New York in September 2015.

## At Least ...

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Shaghati, the top commander of Iraq’s special forces and the commander of Iraq’s Joint Military Operation said that while many forces are participating in the Mosul fight, Iraq’s special forces are the only troops with the skills to fight Daesh.

“The forces who have the skills to fight guerrilla warfare is only the CTS,” he said using an alternative acronym for Iraq’s special forces who are also called the counter-terrorism forces. “They have flexibility and can act quickly,” he said.

Although Shaghati said he believes that the beginning of the Mosul operation marked the end of Daesh in Iraq, the country will likely struggle with terrorist threats long after the Takfiri group is defeated in Mosul.

## Will ...

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But the fears of many go beyond present-day political bickering and reflect the foundations on which modern Turkey is built.

On Monday MP Deniz Baykal, the former leader of the CHP, took the podium in parliament and made an emotional speech calling on MPs to reject the bill.

Baykal said he wasn’t making this call on the basis of “daily politics” but because he felt the need to protect Turkey and its future.

Ahmet Tasgetiren, a columnist at the pro-government Star newspaper, also penned a column saying the AKP itself would never back such a system if it thought the CHP stood a chance of winning.

Meanwhile Omer Dincer, a former education minister from the ranks of the AKP, asked why there is no separation of powers in this proposal and said that checks and balances needed to be strengthened and the path to one-man rule shut in order to protect democracy.

And Sami Selcuk, the former head of Turkey’s appeals court, called on jurists to point out the inherent legal flaws in the current proposal instead of keeping quiet.

Selcuk states that a presidential system can only succeed with a clear separation of powers. He writes that this current version of trying to introduce a presidential system without any separation of powers is laughable and dangerous.

Also fresh in AKP minds is the general election results of June 2015. For the first time the party failed to secure a big enough majority to form a government on its own. Many observers at the time put it down to the ruling party’s campaign pledge to introduce an executive presidency.

In the coming two weeks, parliament will hold four rounds of voting on the bill; two rounds on the entire bill and two on each of the 18 articles in the bill. The first vote on the entire bill was held in the early hours of Tuesday morning and passed with 338 yes votes out of 480 cast.

The bill needs to get 330 votes in the final round to go to a referendum. The government has said it will put the bill to a referendum even if it gets an absolute majority.

If successful in parliament, a referendum is expected in spring or early summer. Critics have also voiced concern over holding a referendum when a state of emergency is in effect.

The government last week pushed through parliament a second three-month extension to the post-coup state of emergency, extending it until 19 April.

Concern has also been voiced that the public is not being informed enough about what this change of governance system entails. Detractors say that with pro-government forces controlling around 90% of media directly or indirectly, there is little chance the public will have enough information to make an informed decision.

State broadcaster TRT’s selective coverage of the parliamentary sessions also meant that several lawmakers wanted a fuller public record.

As Kilicdaroglu reminded MPs and the country on Tuesday, Turkey did not even grant such extensive powers to Ataturk, who won the war of independence and secured the future of modern Turkey.

*-Courtesy: Middle East Eye*

## Opposition:

# MPs Backing Turkey Constitutional Changes Betray People



*Leader of Turkey's main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) Kemal Kilicdaroglu (Photo by Anadolu news agency)*

ANKARA (Press TV) – **The leader of Turkey’s main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) has expressed strong opposition to proposed constitutional amendments that would grant additional executive powers to the president, saying the legislators who ratify the bill will be betraying the public.**

“Those who say ‘yes’ to this will be betraying the citizens who voted for him/her. They are giving the authority to annul the parliament, which represents 100 percent of

the people, to a president who was elected by 51 percent of the votes,” Kemal Kilicdaroglu said in an address to members of his party during a meeting in the capital, Ankara.

The constitutional changes have been proposed by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). If adopted, the amendments should be put to a national referendum before becoming law.

The proposed constitution would take Turkey away from its current parliamentary system, and

introduce an executive presidency, a system of government long sought by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The opposition leader added supporting the draft charter is “treason” against the public will, calling on Turkish citizens to oppose the constitutional reform package.

“I call out to all citizens. If you respect what is right, you will oppose this constitution,” he said.

Kilicdaroglu’s remarks came on the same day that the Turkish

parliament voted for more debates on the amendments.

Kilicdaroglu also asked whether Turkey could be delivered to just one person. “Is Turkey such a small country? Whoever that might be, we are against this system,” he pointed out.

The CHP leader further criticized the government for police attacks on people protesting the constitutional amendments in Ankara, arguing that the country’s constitutional change could not be done in such a manner.

# Bahraini Forces Injure Schoolboy Amid Anti-Regime Gathering

MANAMA (Dispatches) – A Bahraini teenager has sustained injuries after regime forces fired tear gas and shots to disperse a group of teenage students holding an anti-regime gathering in the eastern part of the kingdom.

The students had come together outside their school building on Sitra Island, situated 5 kilometers south of the capital, Manama, on Wednesday morning, local sources said.

Regime force intervened, firing rubber-coated steel bullets and tear gas canisters to break up the gathering. The area was then covered with a cloud of smoke, making several students start coughing and wheezing. A teenager was also shot in the face

during the mayhem.

In another development, scores of regime forces raided the village of Nuwaidrat early on Wednesday, and violently broke into a number of buildings.

The soldiers arrested four local residents and took them away to an unknown location.

Thousands of anti-regime protesters have held numerous demonstrations in Bahrain on an almost daily basis ever since the popular uprising began in the country on February 14, 2011.

They are demanding that the Al Khalifah family relinquish power and let a just system representing all Bahrainis be established.

Manama has gone to great lengths to

clamp down on dissent.

Scores of people have lost their lives and hundreds of others sustained injuries or got arrested as a result of the Al Khalifah regime’s crackdown on anti-regime activists.

Meanwhile, people took to the streets across Bahrain to express solidarity with prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Isa Qassim, whom the Al Khalifah regime has stripped of nationality and summoned to attend a court hearing.

The protesters converged outside the residence of the 79-year-old clergyman in the village of Diraz on Tuesday evening.

Bahraini authorities stripped Sheikh Qassim of his nationality on June 20, 2016. They later dissolved the Islamic

Enlightenment Institution, founded by the cleric, in addition to the opposition al-Risala Islamic Association.

Additionally, dozens of people held a rally in the Sanabis village in the suburbs of Manama to express their resentment with the death sentences recently handed down to three pro-democracy campaigners.

On Monday, Bahrain’s Court of Cassation found Sami Mushaima, Abbas Jamil Tahir al-Sami’ and Ali Abdulshahid al-Singace guilty of killing a member of Emirati forces assisting Manama in its clampdown on Bahraini demonstrators in the northern village of al-Daih back in March 2014, and upheld death sentences against the trio.



*Bahraini schoolboys react after regime forces fired tear gas canisters outside their school on Sitra Island, eastern Bahrain, on January 11, 2017.*