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## [Trump Releases a Controversial and Widely-Criticized Middle East Peace Plan](#)

This week, President Trump announced his so-called 'Deal of the Century' alongside embattled and recently officially-criminally indicted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to a wave of swift and widespread criticism. The controversial plan would allow for U.S. recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and all of the settlements Israel has illegally constructed in the occupied West Bank – the latter of which in particular has alienated much of the world and would mark a radical shift in a half-century-old American policy. The deal has also been condemned for ignoring many of the Palestinians' core desires and key issues which have held up peace talks in the past, as the plan was drafted with no input from the Palestinian side altogether and was emphatically rejected by President Mahmoud Abbas.

The Palestinian "state" proposed under Trump's plan would lack many core principles of sovereignty, including control over borders, airspace, and territorial waters. It also does not allow for several key aspects such as the "right of return" for displaced Palestinians to their ancestral homes, a desire that Palestinians have long held as a vital component of any peace agreement, the removal of Israeli settlers from the occupied West Bank, and a meaningful part of Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state. Instead, the newly-released deal would ensure Israel retains full sovereignty over Jerusalem, except for a few areas to the east and north of the city which are already outside of its security barrier. Large parts of Jerusalem where more than 300,000 Palestinians live, the Old City, and holy sites – including the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound – would remain under Israeli control. The proposed Palestinian "state" in the plan would also include more than a dozen Israeli "enclaves" with the entity's borders monitored by Israel.

Analysts have argued that the deal is not a peace plan at all, but is instead designed to help both Trump and Netanyahu, who are each facing re-election campaigns and are embroiled in scandals. Trump has already been impeached by the U.S. House of Representatives and is currently in the midst of a Senate impeachment trial, while Netanyahu was formally indicted in court on corruption charges merely hours before the Middle East peace plan was announced. According to Guy Ziv, an Israel expert at American University, "The so-called 'Deal of the Century' isn't a peace plan at all...if this plan was truly aimed at breaking the diplomatic stalemate, the Palestinians would have been consulted in the plan's formulation...it satisfies neither the national aspirations of the Palestinian people nor Israel's security needs." In fact, critics have derided the idea of a negotiated plan which completely failed to consult one of the two sides.

At a speech in the West Bank, Palestinian President Abbas dismissed the plan as "nonsense" and mockingly referred to it as the "slap of the century," in reference to the "deal of the century" title that President Trump had touted it as. Abbas added that the Palestinians would resist the plan through "peaceful and popular means." Domestically, high-profile American elected officials also reacted harshly to the plan. Senator Bernie Sanders said the proposal was "unacceptable" and called for an end to "the Israeli occupation," while Senator Elizabeth Warren stated that a plan lacking Palestinian involvement "isn't diplomacy, it's a sham."

Trump's proposed Middle East peace plan is the latest in a series of one-sided actions taken by his administration which have infuriated Palestinians. Since taking office, he has also: moved the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, recognized the disputed Golan Heights as part of Israel, reversed longstanding State Department legal opinion that Israel's settlements in the West Bank are illegal under international law, closed a Palestinian mission in Washington D.C., and stopped aid for Palestinian refugees. In doing so, the Trump administration has overturned decades of U.S. foreign policy and alienated the Palestinians from the peace process.

In response to the proposed plan, 12 U.S. Senators, led by Senator Chris Van Hollen, sent a letter to Trump which called the proposal a "one-sided blow to prospects of a viable two-state solution." In their letter, the Senators added that "previous presidents of both parties successfully maintained the respect of both Israelis and Palestinians for the United States' role as a credible player in difficult negotiations...your one-sided actions have made that impossible" and the plan is "a recipe for renewed division and conflict in the region."

*\*Side-By-Side Images of Trump's Proposal for the State of Israel and a Future State of Palestine are on the Next Page*

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Source: The White House