

# Moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem: From Campaign Promise to Policy Challenge

by [Robert Satloff \(/experts/robert-satloff\)](#)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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If President Trump decides to honor his commitment to relocate the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, he should move quickly to consult with Israel, assess and prepare responses for potential security challenges, and engage key regional and international partners in the context of a broader adjustment of U.S. policy, according to a new presidential transition paper by Washington Institute executive director Robert Satloff.

"Past presidents -- both Democratic and Republican -- who made and then broke this promise were evidently convinced that the relocation of America's main diplomatic mission to Jerusalem would ignite such outrage and trigger such violence that the costs outweighed the benefits," he writes. "This analysis, however, takes ominous warnings by certain Middle East leaders at face value, builds on what is essentially a condescending view of Arabs and Muslims that assumes they will react mindlessly to incendiary calls to violence, and fails to acknowledge the potential impact of subtle, creative, and at times forceful American diplomacy."

Operationally, designating a Jerusalem hotel suite or another rental property as the temporary official home of the U.S. ambassador and either setting up the ambassador's office within an existing U.S. government facility in Jerusalem or announcing the design and construction of a new U.S. embassy in the city would fulfill the president's promise.

Both the residence and embassy should be located in that part of the city Israel has controlled since 1948-49, Satloff argues. This would underscore that the embassy move repairs an historic injustice that dates to Israel's founding -- the fact that the United States has never formally recognized any part of Jerusalem as Israel's capital -- without signaling a change in the status quo for the city's holy sites. All this should be done as soon as possible, well in advance of the June anniversary of the 1967 war, since delay could allow critics to marshal resources to impede the embassy relocation.

*[Listen to a podcast conversation on this study \(https://soundcloud.com/the-washington-institute/a-us-embassy-in-jerusalem-with-ghaith-al-omari-and-david-makovsky\)](https://soundcloud.com/the-washington-institute/a-us-embassy-in-jerusalem-with-ghaith-al-omari-and-david-makovsky) with Institute Senior Fellow Ghaith al-Omari and Ziegler Distinguished Fellow David Makovsky.*

## THE AUTHOR

**R**OBERT SATLOFF (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/experts/view/satloff-robert>) is the executive director and holds the Howard P. Berkowitz Chair in U.S. Middle East Policy at The Washington Institute. An expert on Arab and Islamic politics, he has published widely on the Arab-Israeli peace process, the challenge of political Islam, and the need to revamp U.S. public diplomacy in the Middle East.

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