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<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/03/israel-plans-new-settlement-east-jerusalem>

### Emboldened by Trump, Israel pushes on with East Jerusalem settlement plans

Rights groups condemn proposals for 1,800 housing units in the heart of a Palestinian neighbourhood

Peter Beaumont Last modified on Tuesday 4 July 2017 07.00 AEST

Israel is pushing forward with controversial plans to build 1,800 new settlement housing units in occupied East Jerusalem in the largest proposed surge in construction in recent years.

The plans are expected to be considered by the Jerusalem district planning committee this month. If approved, they would mark an end to the relative slowdown in Israeli construction in the eastern parts of the city.

Israel's rightwing government appears to have been emboldened by the pro-Israel stance of the Trump administration, which has been far more muted in its criticism of settlements than its predecessor.

When the Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu met Donald Trump in Washington earlier this year, the US president issued a weakly-worded request that Netanyahu limit settlement activity.

The disclosure of the East Jerusalem plans by the Peace Now group came as Netanyahu approved proposals to allow Israeli MPs to once again visit the flashpoint Temple Mount-Haram al-Sharif complex on a five-day trial, starting this month.

Visits by MPs to the site – considered the holiest in Judaism and the third-holiest in Islam – were banned in 2015 after a wave of Palestinian violence following claims that Israel was attempting to take control of the compound.

The two issues seem likely to raise tensions once again in Jerusalem, over which Israel has claimed sovereignty since it seized the Old City and eastern neighbourhoods in 1967. Israel's claim is not recognised by much of the international community. Palestinians claim East Jerusalem as the capital of a future state.

The construction plans include proposals for Jewish buildings, such as an eight-storey yeshiva, in Sheikh Jarrah, which Palestinians regard as being at the very heart of East Jerusalem.

According to Peace Now, the plans would also involve demolishing the homes of five Palestinian families, who have had long-term tenancy rights.

Israeli settlements are considered illegal under international law as they are built on occupied territory.

Last month, Israel began work on the first new settlement in the West Bank in 25 years to house rightwing extremist settlers [expelled from the illegal out-post of Amona in February](#).

According to official Israeli statistics the period between April 2016 and March 2017 saw a 70.4% increase in settlement housing construction in the occupied West Bank.

The plans for new settlement housing in Sheikh Jarrah are likely to be the most contentious following an outcry seven years ago – [which prompted mass protests by activists](#) –when Palestinians were evicted in similar moves.

The neighbourhood is regarded as heavy with symbolism for both sides. For Israel, it was home to a small Jewish community until 1948 when East Jerusalem came under Jordanian rule after the war that saw Israel's birth.

Then in the 1950s several dozen Palestinian refugee families from west Jerusalem – displaced by the same war – were settled there.

In recent years, however, a number of these Palestinian families have been evicted as a result of Israeli court rulings to recognise pre-1948 Jewish ownership claims under laws that refuse to recognise claims made by Palestinians forced to leave west Jerusalem in similar circumstances.

Peace Now and other groups condemned the plans, accusing the Israeli government of trying to destroy the two-state solution.

“The government is brutally attempting to destroy the possibility of the two-state solution, and this time it is by establishing a new settlement at the heart of a Palestinian neighbourhood in East Jerusalem and promoting nearly 1,800 housing units beyond the Green Line,” they said in a statement.

“The eviction of five Palestinian families, which are protected tenants, in order to establish a new settlement in Sheikh Jarrah shows that nothing will get in the way of settler groups and a pro-settler government from preventing a future compromise in Jerusalem.

## ALP's Palestinian push to end Israel bipartisanship

The Australian 12:00AM July 4, 2017

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/editorials/alps-palestinian-push-to-end-israel-bipartisanship/news-story/2573f21c3bod46259870c943f3b2d035>

Recognition of a clearly non-existent Palestinian state is one of the great global obsessions of our times. But Bill Shorten will be doing neither himself nor the Labor Party any favours if he allows himself to be steamrolled into going along with moves within the NSW branch of the ALP to dump 40 years of common sense on Israel and commit a future Labor government to unconditional recognition of a Palestinian state. There is a warning for him in the mess British Labour has been in over Palestinian statehood and the highly damaging perceptions of anti-Semitism and hostility to Israel fed by Jeremy Corbyn's "friendship" with Hamas and Hezbollah terrorists.

For cynical reasons, probably not unrelated to winning votes among large Muslim communities in western Sydney seats, former foreign minister and NSW premier Bob Carr has been leading the charge within the NSW party, even though such matters should be left for the national conference. The consequence of what would be a "historic" move by NSW to drop decades of "instinctive" support for Israel would, as Simon Benson reported yesterday, likely lead to next year's national conference doing the same.

Mr Shorten, who has a long history of friendship for Israel, must ensure that does not happen. The "it's time to recognise Palestinian statehood" argument may appear plausible. But it's not. How could it be when there is no such thing as a viable Palestinian state to recognise? International law may have many arcane aspects, but it is crystal clear on what a state needs to be before that can happen. It has to have defined borders: the present Palestinian "state" has none. It won't have any until its leaders negotiate with Israel. It also has to have a stable government in demonstrable control of the state: the writ of Mahmoud Abbas's Palestinian Authority is limited to the West Bank and it has no authority in Gaza, which is ruled by Hamas, its arch-enemy.

Even the argument Kevin Rudd ran in February, demanding not just Labor but Australia recognise Palestine, is specious. He argued Australia should go along because 137 other states have already done so. That overlooks how all major developed nations — the US, Britain, Germany, France, Canada and others aligned with Australia — have declined to go along with the fantasy of recognising a non-existent state. The real mischief lies in backing Palestinian moves aimed at achieving statehood through the backdoor of winning numbers at the UN, rather than by negotiating with Israel. This tactic is damaging to what hopes there are for resumed talks between the Palestinians and Israelis and the two-state solution that holds the best hopes for peace.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, on his visit to Australia in February, recommitted to talks without preconditions. Mr Abbas and his colleagues remain obdurate, using claims over Israeli settlements to shy away from talking. Underpinning their refusal is the conviction they can win statehood through the UN — the course advocated by the NSW ALP.

Abandoning bipartisanship on Israel would put our nation at odds with the Middle East's only democracy — a country whose security and welfare are close to the hearts of many Australians. It should not go unnoticed that while Labor preoccupies itself with same-sex marriage, the move in the NSW branch implies going against the only country in the Middle East where a gay pride march can be held without participants being attacked. Fashionable obsession it may be, but Labor has a lot to lose if it allows the NSW branch to get its way.

## ALP's Palestinian change wrong

Greg Sheridan 12:00AM July 4, 2017

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/columnists/greg-sheridan/labors-palestinian-shift-wrong-and-bad-politics-too/news-story/c8ba0261e294bdef5a48f735d5369fbo>

Those in the Labor Party with a sensible view of the Middle East have not yet accepted that a proposed NSW resolution — demanding a federal Labor government immediately recognise a Palestinian state — will be translated into a similar, binding resolution at a federal ALP conference next year.

For one thing, the timing of that federal conference is not certain. It could well be held in the shadow of a looming federal election. That may inject a dose of realism into the party. But the long-term trend within the Labor Party is clear: the internal culture of the ALP is trending leftward, and organisational Labor is becoming an anti-Israel party. This is damaging for Labor, as Israel still enjoys wide support in Australia and identifying with that acrid range of international forces that hate Israel can only hurt Labor.

It is wrong in principle and likely to be bad politics.

For the two-state solution to work and a Palestinian state to come into existence, both sides will have to compromise. The Palestinian leadership has shown no willingness to compromise on a range of issues, among them: the absurd claim that millions of Palestinian-descended people be allowed to settle in Israel proper; on recognising Israel as a Jewish state; on ending incitement to terrorism; on accepting that there will have to be Israeli control over borders until the state can prove it is not a deadly security threat to Israeli security; and much more.

Not only that, a good portion of Palestinian territory, the Gaza Strip, is controlled by Hamas, which Australian law recognises as a designated terrorist group.

So to call for the immediate diplomatic recognition of a Palestinian state is unrealistic, unhelpful, irresponsible and an example of the poisonous ideological extremism spreading through Western politics on the left and right like a spilt ink bottle spreads over a thirsty blotter.

All of this, paradoxically, provides a certain, limited, national security rationale for electing a Bill Shorten-led government. Given the change in the culture of centre-left parties

internationally and the rise of left activism generally, Shorten is probably the last right-wing leader Labor will have for a very long time.

The abomination of Jeremy Corbyn, British Labour's most left-wing, extreme leader in its history, means Australian Labor hard heads are unlikely to go any further down the road of changing how the leader is elected. The hybrid formula — 50 per cent of the vote to MPs and 50 per cent to a rank-and-file ballot — won't be changed.

On national security, Shorten is the most reliable and sensible centre-left leader in opposition in the West, infinitely better than Corbyn or Bernie Sanders, say, in the US. Shorten's defence spokesman, Richard Marles, is a national-security realist and a friend of Israel. Opposition foreign affairs spokeswoman Penny Wong is entirely mainstream, and perhaps, with Chris Bowen, Labor's key advocate of an open economy.

Shorten is also a political realist. If forced to declare some ridiculous recognition of a Palestinian state, he will do so. But he will run a pro-Israel government and a government that will maintain every element of the close friendship and association with Israel that Australian governments have intensified over recent years.

There is no doubt the culture of Labor is moving away from the hard-headed national-security approach Bob Hawke, Paul Keating and Kim Beazley embedded into the party after the disastrous leftism of Gough Whitlam. How much damage that internal party culture ultimately does to a Labor government remains to be seen.



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“Why Palestine? Because it is a just cause, a noble ideal, a moral quest for equality and human rights” – Edward Saïd