
NETANYAHU: BULGARIA TO OPEN HONORARY CONSULATE IN JERUSALEM

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Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday said his Bulgarian counterpart assured him that his country will open an honorary consulate in Jerusalem.

Netanyahu told the weekly cabinet meeting at his office in the capital that he had spoken with Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov on Saturday night about setting up the mission.

In the wake of the US relocating its embassy to Jerusalem in May, Israel has been urging other countries to follow suit.

He decided, after he was here a few days ago, to open an honorary consulate here in Jerusalem, Netanyahu said. He took care to explain to me in our conversation that this consulate will not only deal with Bulgarian matters in Jerusalem, but with Bulgarian issues all over Israel.

I told him the step is welcomed, and that I very much hope that it will lead to the swift opening of the official full Bulgarian embassy in Jerusalem, added Netanyahu.

Earlier this month, Borisov met with Netanyahu in Jerusalem, where he expressed his understanding of Israel's desire for the international community to recognize the city as its capital. He also stressed, however, that Bulgaria would not move its embassy to Jerusalem until an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal is signed.

US President Donald Trump broke with decades of policy when in December 2017 he announced that he planned to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and move the US embassy there, infuriating Palestinians who see the eastern section of the city as the capital of a future state. The US embassy was officially opened in the capital on May 14.

Bulgaria responded to Trump's move by declaring that the status of Jerusalem as the sacred site of the three monotheistic religions should be agreed in the course of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations that will lead to an agreement on the Palestinian territories final status.

On December 21, Bulgaria voted in favor of a United Nations General Assembly resolution that called Trump's Jerusalem decision null and void and said it must be rescinded.

So far, the US, Guatemala and Paraguay have moved their embassies in Israel to Jerusalem. Several other countries, including the Czech Republic and Romania, have expressed interest in a relocation, though no such move appears imminent.

At the end of May, the Czech Republic reopened its honorary consulate in Jerusalem. It named Dan

Propper, a 78-year-old Israeli businessman of Czech origin, as the new honorary consul.

Opened in the early 1990s, the Czech honorary consulate in Jerusalem was closed in 2016 due to the death of the honorary consul.

Czech President Milos Zeman, known for his pro-Israel stance, has repeatedly said he also wants to see his countrys embassy transferred to Jerusalem.

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