

Guatemala raises flag over new Jerusalem embassy site ahead of May 16 opening



Israel's foreign ministry welcomes raising of Guatemalan flag at site of new embassy ahead of its May 16 opening

Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs Twitter (Screenshot)

New Guatemalan mission will officially open two days after the US inaugurates its new embassy on May 14

Guatemala raised its flag at the site of its new embassy in Jerusalem on Tuesday, ahead of its official opening next week following the inauguration of the United States' own new mission in the city.

The official opening of Guatemala's new embassy at the the Malcha Technology Park in Jerusalem will take place on May 16, two days after the US cuts the

ribbon on its own new embassy on May 14.

Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales is likely to attend the event, *Haaretz* reports.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed the new Guatemalan mission to Jerusalem, saying he was “moved” to see the Guatemalan flag raised in Israel’s “eternal capital.”

“I was moved to see the flag of Guatemala waving in Jerusalem in advance of the opening of the Guatemalan embassy later this month. Dear friends, welcome back to our eternal capital,” Netanyahu said.

Yuval Rotem, Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote on Twitter: “Wonderful to see Guatemala’s flag flying proudly above the new Guatemalan embassy in Israel’s capital, Jerusalem. Looking forward to seeing many more flags joining Guatemala’s in the city of peace.”



Guatemala’s President Jimmy Morales meets with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington DC on March 4 2018.

Haim Tzach/GPO

Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales first announced the move of the country's embassy to Jerusalem in his speech at the AIPAC policy conference in Washington this March.

"I'm sure many more countries will follow suit shortly," Morales said.

Romania, the Czech Republic, Paraguay, and Honduras have all also indicated that they were considering moving their embassies to Jerusalem — a city claimed by both Israel and the Palestinians as their capital.

In December 2017, US President Donald Trump officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and announced his intention to move the American embassy from its current location in Tel Aviv to the holy city.

The decision upended decades of careful US policy towards the disputed city, the status of which is one of the most contentious issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Until now, the US embassy has been located in Tel Aviv with a separate consulate general located in Jerusalem that represents US interests in the Palestinian territories.

The new American embassy is set to be initially located in a US consular building in Jerusalem's Arnona neighborhood while Washington searches for a permanent location.

The new US mission is set to open on May 14, coinciding with Israel's celebration of the 70th anniversary of its independence — a day marked by Palestinians as the "Nakba", or "Day of Catastrophe".

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