

Israel leaders embrace Pence as a ‘mensch,’ others show their anger

WASHINGTON — Vice President Pence repeatedly made headlines during a four-day trip to the Middle East taken weeks after the Trump administration recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel — a move that sparked protests throughout the region after Trump’s December announcement.

Here are highlights from the trip, which ended Tuesday with a visit to the Yad Vashem holocaust memorial and to the Western Wall.

Faster timeline for embassy move

Addressing the Israeli parliament Monday, Pence announced the U.S. embassy will move from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in 2019. That’s a faster timetable than administration officials had projected after Trump announced in December that the United States would recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital. While the announcement was applauded by Christian conservatives in the United States — a strong base of support for the Trump administration with close ties to Pence — Christian leaders in the Middle East canceled meetings with Pence that had been on the original schedule before the trip got pushed into January. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas also called off a planned meeting with Pence in Bethlehem after the December announcement.



Vice President Mike Pence

🇺🇸@VP

The Trump administration will advance our plan to open the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem – and the Embassy will open before the end of next year. #VPinIsrael

Protests continue

Arab lawmakers interrupted the start of Pence’s speech with protest signs proclaiming that Jerusalem is the Capital of Palestine. They were pushed out of

the chamber by Knesset security officers as other lawmakers loudly applauded. Continuing his opening remarks, Pence called it “deeply humbling for me to stand before this vibrant democracy.” Pence received a lengthy standing ovation after his speech. But the chief negotiator for the Palestinians tweeted that “The messianic discourse of Pence is a gift to extremists & has proven that the US Administration is part of the problem rather than the solution.”



Jenna Johnson

📧@wpjenna

As Vice President Pence began to speak at the Israeli parliament, a group of lawmakers stood to protest and were kicked out of the chamber. There are now 13 empty seats. Pence stood quietly and watched, then commended this “vibrant democracy.”

Pence is a “Mensch”

The criticism Pence faced from Palestinians was offset by the love he got from Israelis. Israeli President Reuven Rivlin summed up his effusive praise of Pence, as someone who stands “very firm behind your words,” by saying there is only one word to describe him: a mensch. That’s the “highest of Jewish compliments,” *The Jerusalem Post* reported.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told Pence that “the day I met you, I knew you were a true friend. Netanyahu also said he was touched to learn from Pence that he has a photo of their 2009 meeting in the Vice President’s residence, in Washington.

Pence concluded his trip Tuesday by touring Yad Vashem with Netanyahu and visiting the Western Wall, an outer wall of the Second Temple left behind when Rome destroyed it in 70 A.D., and the holiest site where Jews can pray.



Vice President Mike Pence

🇺🇸@VP

A privilege to pray at the Western Wall. This is our 4th trip to the Holy Land, but Karen & I never fail to leave without a sense our faith has been renewed – our faith in God, but also our faith in the people of Israel & their commitment to freedom, security & peace. #VPinIsrael

No progress on peace talks

While Pence insisted that recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel makes a peace agreement more possible, not less, an administration official told reporters there has been no contact with the Palestinian leadership since the announcement. Pence told Reuters the White House is working with partners in the region to develop a framework for a peace agreement. But, Pence said, “it all just depends now on when the Palestinians are going to come back to the table.”



Vice President Mike Pence

📺@VP

I truly believe that in making the decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, PEACE is now MORE POSSIBLE, not less possible. #VPinIsrael

Pence breaks silence on Trump

In an interview with the Associated Press in Jerusalem, Pence offered his first response to reports that Trump referred to Haiti and African nations as “shithole countries,” and that Trump had an affair with an adult film actress in 2005, shortly after Melania Trump gave birth to his youngest son. Although the Wall Street Journal reported that Trump’s lawyer paid the actress to not talk to reporters before the 2016 election, Pence called the allegations “baseless.” Trump has also denied making the “shithole countries” comments, reportedly made during discussions about whether to include immigrants from El Salvador, Haiti and African countries in an immigration bill. Pence told the Associated Press that he “knows the president’s heart” and Trump wants a merit-based system that doesn’t consider an immigrant’s “race or creed.”

📺 Ken Thomas

✓@KThomasDC

JERUSALEM (AP) _ Pence says adult film star’s account of a sexual encounter with Trump in 2006 is a ‘baseless’ allegation.

📺 Ken Thomas

✓@KThomasDC

JERUSALEM (AP) _ Pence defends Trump on comments disparaging Africa, says his ‘heart’ aimed at fair immigration system regardless of race.

Traveling amid government shutdown

While other parts of the federal government prepared for a shutdown, the White House said Pence's trip would proceed as scheduled because it was "integral to America's national security & diplomatic objectives." But Pence took the unusual step of giving reporters Internet access during his departure flight Friday night so reporters traveling with him could send out a statement from Pence blaming Democrats for the showdown that "has dangerous consequences for our national defense." Pence repeated his criticism of Democrats while visiting a military facility near the Syrian border. Bill Kristol, who was the top aide to Vice President Dan Quayle and is a critic of the Trump administration, tweeted that it was depressing for the vice president to use American troops "as props for a partisan political message."

[View image on Twitter](#)



Bill Kristol

✓@BillKristol

Depressing. The Vice President, visiting American troops abroad, uses them as props for a partisan political message.

Pence intervenes for journalists

Pence had to intervene after Egyptian officials tried to bar the 12 reporters traveling with the vice president from attending his meeting with Egyptian leader Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. While one cameraman was allowed into the start of the meeting, the rest were blocked from getting out of the press van during what a reporter called a “prolonged and tense negotiation by the US delegation to get more press access.” In the end, the group was allowed in the room for about nine minutes after the leaders had been meeting for about 90 minutes. The meeting itself may also have been tense, as suggested by this LA. Times headline: Vice President Mike Pence gets an earful in Cairo on his first official Middle East tour. For his part, Pence described the Egyptian leaders’ dissatisfaction with the new U.S. policy on Jerusalem as “a disagreement between friends.”

 Brian Bennett

✓@ByBrianBennett

Vice President Mike Pence gets an earful in Cairo on his first official Middle East tour <http://www.latimes.com/politics/la-fg-pence-egypt-20180120-story.html> ...

Female reports complain about “Pence Fence” in Israel

While male reporters covering Pence’s visit to the Western Wall were given front-row spots, female journalists were relegated to the back where they had to stand on chairs to see. Outraged female journalists started tweeting about the #PenceFence. The Washington Post reported that the ultra-Orthodox Jewish Western Wall Heritage Foundation set up two platforms side by side, straddling the barrier that divides the section of

the wall where men pray from the section women use. (The foundation said the arrangement was the same as when Trump visited in 2017.) One reporter tweeted that White House staff removed the “white #PenceFence awning that prevented us women from seeing Veep,” but the women were “still stuck behind men.”





✖ Tal Schneider

✔ @talschneider

Separation at the Western Wall. The women stuck in isolation and can not photograph, work. Women journalists are second-class citizens. The American women photographers are frantically yelling at the representatives of the White House. #PenceFence

Karen Pence promotes art therapy

Second Lady Karen Pence, who often travels with her husband, found the one practicing art therapist in Egypt to promote her signature cause. In addition to her meetings with art therapists in all three countries visited, Pence toured ancient sites in Jordan, participated in diplomatic events and sat for an interview with an Israeli station during which she called Israel one of her favorite places in the world. "For us as Christians, it's a very special place," Pence said. "It's the place where Jesus walked."





✖ Karen Pence

✔@SecondLady

Great conversation in Cairo, Egypt with the only art therapist in the country. She's doing fantastic work with the clients—making a difference! Encouraged to learn how she's trying to get an art therapy education program in Egypt. #ArtTherapy

Source: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/01/23/israel-leaders-embrace-pence-mensch-others-show-their-anger/1057712001/>

[Disclaimer]