



Written by [James Murphy](#) on March 22, 2019

Trump Says U.S. Should Recognize Israel's Sovereignty in the Golan Heights

President Donald Trump is never one to shy away from bold action. In a move certain to ruffle some feathers in the Middle East — and in the United Nations — Trump announced it was time for the United States to recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights.



The 690 square miles of the Golan Heights was originally seized by Israel during the Six-Day War of 1967. In 1981, Israel passed the Golan Heights Law, in which it claimed legal and administrative rights throughout the territory. Since 1967, the area has acted as a buffer between Israel and Syria. The Golan Heights are strategically important as they overlook northeastern Israel and the Sea of Galilee. Syria has claimed that any future peace treaty with Israel hinges on the return of the Heights, which it still insists belongs to Syria.

"After 52 years it is time for the United States to fully recognize Israel's Sovereignty over the Golan Heights, which is of critical strategic and security importance to the State of Israel and Regional Stability!" the [president tweeted](#) on Thursday afternoon.

The move coincided with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's visit to Israel. Some are claiming that Pompeo's visit, which included a trip to the Wailing Wall, and President Trump's announcement on the Golan Heights were timed in order to give Israel's embattled Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a boost in the upcoming election on April 9.

Netanyahu is currently [under investigation for corruption](#) and is facing possible criminal indictment on charges of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust.

The majority of Israeli citizens believe that the Golan Heights should be a part of Israel.

When asked by Fox Business Network host Maria Bartiromo if the move was about the upcoming Israeli election and Netanyahu's position, Trump demurred. "No, I wouldn't even know about that," the president said.

"I hear he [Netanyahu] is doing ok. But I imagine the other side, whoever's against him, is also in favor of what I just did."

"Every president has said, 'do that.' I'm the one who gets it done."

Last Christmas Eve, Netanyahu called for a [snap election](#) in a bid to solidify his coalition's position in the Knesset. Along with his possible corruption charges, Netanyahu's ruling coalition had only a 61-59



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vote advantage, making governing difficult and prompting him to claim, “If it’s too difficult to pass laws, we need elections.”

Netanyahu welcomed the Trump announcement with gratitude, stating, “He did it again. First, he recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital [and put] the U.S. Embassy there. Then, he pulled out of the disastrous Iran treaty,” Netanyahu said, during a joint news conference with Pompeo.

“But now he did something of equal historic importance,” said Netanyahu. [He] recognized Israel’s sovereignty over the Golan Heights.”

Trump’s move is in conflict with a [1981 United Nation’s Security Council Resolution](#), which states that “The Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights is null and void and without international legal effect.”

So, in a way, Trump is telling the UN to “get lost” as well.

A source in the Syrian foreign ministry called Trump’s statement an example of his “blind bias of the United States” toward Israel and said it did not change “the reality that the Golan Heights was and will remain Syrian.”

Iran, a close ally of Syria, also found Trump’s announcement disagreeable. “This illegal and unacceptable recognition does not change the fact that [the Golan Heights] belongs to Syria,” an Iranian foreign ministry spokesman said.

Turkey, who has been heavily involved in the Syrian Civil War, warned that Trump’s recognition risks creating a new flashpoint in the Middle East. At a meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Istanbul, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said, “We cannot allow the legitimization of the occupation of the Golan Heights.”

And even Russia, who is backing Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, chimed in. “Certainly, such appeals can considerably destabilize an already tense situation in the Middle East,” said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. “It’s just a call for now, hopefully it will remain a call.”

The administration has been hinting at the change for a while now. Last November, for the first time, the United States joined Israel in [voting against a U.N. resolution](#) condemning the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights. And just last week, a [State Department report on human rights](#) referred to the heights as “Israeli-controlled” instead of “occupied territory.”

So, President Trump has clearly taken Israel’s — and Bibi Netanyahu’s — side in the Middle East. Past presidents, while voicing support for Israel, have not always been so clear on the subject.

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