

Palestine says Paraguay embassy move to Jerusalem an ‘act of aggression’;



Ramallah, May 22 (RHC)-- Paraguay has opened its new embassy in Jerusalem, following in the footsteps of the United States and Guatemala and becoming the third country worldwide to do so, despite blatant human rights violations and a recent massacre by the Israeli occupation forces.

President Horacio Cartes inaugurated the embassy Monday, days after the U.S. and Guatemala did the same. “I’m not friends with tepid or ambiguous decisions,” said Cartes, who reaffirmed his government’s support to -- what he called -- a “noble and brave nation,” referring to Israel. He claimed that Paraguay shares “values and principles such as democracy, liberty, defense of human rights and tolerance,” ignoring the more than one hundred unarmed Palestinians killed in the last month and a half by Israeli military.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was present at the opening ceremony and thanked President Cartes for his decision. “This is a great day for Israel, a great day for Paraguay, a great day for our friendship,” said Netanyahu.

In turn, the Palestinian Foreign Ministry declared Paraguay’s moving of its embassy to Jerusalem an

illegal and illegitimate act of aggression against the Palestinian people and their rights, a violation of relevant United Nations resolutions and international law and a submission to U.S. and Israeli dictates and bribes.

"Taking such a provocative and irresponsible step comes as part of the complicit role of Paraguay, following the steps of the U.S. and Guatemala, to consolidate the Israeli military occupation and annex Jerusalem," said Hanan Ashrawi, member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) executive committee.

The status of Jerusalem is one of the thorniest obstacles to forging a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians, who with broad international backing want East Jerusalem, captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war, as their capital.

Israel regards all of the city, including the eastern part it annexed after the 1967 conflict, as its capital. In December, U.S. President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, reversing decades of U.S. policy and upsetting the Arab world and Western allies. Most world powers do not recognize Israeli sovereignty over the entire city and says its final status should be set in peace negotiations.

The Israeli army and police deployed thousands of officers in Jerusalem and along the Gaza Strip for the U.S. embassy relocation ceremony, sparking condemnation from the international community. According to health officials, at least 63 Palestinians were killed along the Gaza Strip during the demonstrations last week.

Cartes faces multiple accusations of fraud, drug trafficking and money laundering. His uncle, Juan Domingo Viveros Cartes, was sentenced to eight years in prison last month for drug trafficking, after being a fugitive for years before being extradicted from Uruguay in 2016.

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