

Kosovo opens Israel embassy in Jerusalem with Washington's blessing



Albanians walk past Israeli and Kosovar flags displayed at the foreign ministry in Pristina, Kosovo. [Photo: Armend Nimani/AFP]

Jerusalem, March 14 (RHC)-- Kosovo says it has formally opened its embassy to Israel in Jerusalem, becoming the first European country to establish an embassy in the disputed city whose status is at the

core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A foreign ministry statement on Sunday said the move was made after the establishment of diplomatic ties with Israel on February 1st and a Kosovo-Serbia summit held at the White House in September.

“The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora announces that the Kosovo Embassy in the State of Israel, with headquarters in Jerusalem, officially has been opened,” the statement said. Kosovo follows the United States and Guatemala in establishing its embassy in Jerusalem.

Kosovo’s decision was taken when outgoing Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti met Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic at the White House in September with then-President Donald Trump.

“Setting of the plaques and the state flag at the Kosovo Embassy in Israel reflects the Government of Kosovo’s commitment to comply with the pledge for establishing the diplomatic mission to Jerusalem,” it said.

Ines Demiri, Kosovo’s Charge d’Affaires to Israel, called it a “truly proud and historic moment. “The greatest honour of my life is to have this opportunity to open the embassy and proudly serve my country in Israel,” Demiri wrote on Twitter.

Palestinians claim occupied East Jerusalem, captured by Israel in the 1967 war, as the capital of a future state. Most of the international community does not recognize the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem and says the competing claims to the city should be resolved through negotiations. Most international embassies are in Tel Aviv.

The move was in exchange for Israel recognising Kosovo, a major victory for Pristina’s efforts to gain full global recognition of the independence it declared in 2008 following a war with Serbia in the 1990s.

Serbia has refused to acknowledge the independence of its former province, so while Kosovo has now been recognised by much of the Western world, its rejection by Belgrade’s key allies Russia and China has locked it out of the United Nations.

Israel had been another key holdout until last month when it established diplomatic ties with Kosovo. In exchange, Kosovo followed by recognising Jerusalem as the Jewish state’s capital.

Albin Kurti, prime minister-designate, has found himself in a difficult diplomatic position ahead of taking up his post after pressure from Turkey, a close ally of the new Western Balkan country, to change its mind about the Jerusalem location. Kurti has said: “The place where the embassy will be located is to be considered following checking of the documentation of the outgoing government.”

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has warned Kosovo that the move could damage future relations with his country. In one of Europe’s most intractable disputes, Serbia has rejected Kosovo’s independence since it broke away in a 1998-1999 war that was ended only by a NATO bombing campaign against Serb troops.

Kosovo and Serbia face mounting pressure from the West to resolve the impasse, seen as crucial to either side joining the European Union.



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