

Trump picks pro-settlement Mike Huckabee as U.S. ambassador to Israel



"Praise the Lord... and pass the ammunition."

Washington, November 13 (RHC)-- U.S. President-elect Donald Trump has announced the nomination of his former 2016 Republican primary election opponent Mike Huckabee to the post of United States

ambassador to Israel.

“I am pleased to announce that the Highly Respected former Governor of Arkansas, Mike Huckabee, has been nominated to be The United States Ambassador to Israel...” Trump wrote via his Truth social platform on Tuesday.

Huckabee, who served as Arkansas governor from 1996 to 2007, also made two unsuccessful bids for president during the 2008 and 2016 Republican primary campaigns. His daughter, current Arkansas Governor Sarah Huckabee-Sanders, also served as Trump’s press secretary for part of his first term as president, from 2017 to 2019.

“Mike has been a great public servant, Governor, and Leader in Faith for many years. He loves Israel, and the people of Israel, and likewise, the people of Israel love him”, a statement attached to Trump’s TruthSocial post read. “Mike will work tirelessly to bring about Peace in the Middle East!”

Huckabee is noted for his Evangelical Christian faith, which he ties closely to his policies and beliefs on Israel, declaring on several occasions that the occupied West Bank is biblically part of Israeli territory.

“There are certain words I refuse to use. There is no such thing as a West Bank. It’s Judea and Samaria. There’s no such thing as a settlement. They’re communities, they’re neighbourhoods, they’re cities. There’s no such thing as an occupation,” he said on CNN in 2017.

In 2015, during his run for president, Huckabee attended a fundraiser for American citizens in the Israeli settlement of Shiloh, describing the West Bank, which he again referred to as “Judea and Samaria,” the territory’s biblical name – as a fundamental part of Israel.

Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank are illegal under international law.

Trump’s pick for ambassador to Israel signals more about his potential policy towards the U.S. ally in his second term, with many expecting him to go even further than current President Joe Biden in his support for Israel as it wages war on Gaza and Lebanon.

Biden has consistently refused to punish Israel for killing tens of thousands in its wars, amid global calls for it to stop. However, he did reinstate a policy Trump rescinded that terms Israeli settlements like the one Huckabee visited in 2015 “illegitimate.”

Last week, days after Trump was again elected president, Israel tapped Yechiel Leiter, a staunch supporter of settlements in the West Bank, as ambassador to the United States.

Trump this week also appointed Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, another staunch supporter of Israel who gained national attention during congressional hearings earlier this year about the handling of pro-Palestinian protests at elite U.S. universities, as UN ambassador.

The incoming president’s cabinet will have an even more pro-Israel look to it if Trump picks Florida Senator Marco Rubio as his secretary of state, as appears likely.

Rubio has had a hawkish stance on Israel’s war on Gaza, which has killed at least 43,665 people, telling an activist in 2023 that he did not support a ceasefire and that Hamas was “100 percent to blame” for the deaths of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

He then supported Trump’s plan to deport foreign pro-Palestinian student demonstrators to get them to “behave.”

Israeli politicians are positioning themselves for a Trump presidency, with far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich saying on Monday that he hoped the president-elect would recognise the illegal

annexation of Palestinian territory in the occupied West Bank.

In his first term, Trump went against longstanding policy and moved the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, the eastern half of which is occupied Palestinian territory, and also recognized the illegal annexation of the occupied Golan Heights, which is Syrian territory.

Huckabee is the first non-Jewish American to be named ambassador to Israel in almost twenty years.

The last was ambassador James Cunningham, a career diplomat nominated by President George W Bush in 2008.

Huckabee's nomination underscores the growing sway of evangelical Christians in the Republican Party's ties to Israel. Followers of Christian Zionism believe that modern Israel is a manifestation of Bible prophecies and that the US's fate is linked to it.

Huckabee has fallen somewhat from the political spotlight. In recent years, he has focused on offering all-inclusive evangelical Christian tours of Israel for \$5,850 per trip. The tours, marketed towards senior citizens, combine travel with a dose of politics.

"You'll learn about Israel's heritage from both a Biblical and a historical perspective. You'll hear from top Israeli officials about the strategic place Israel holds today and why America is such a valuable ally to her," the advertisement for the Huckabee-led tours says.

When he was running for the Republican presidential nomination, Huckabee claimed, "There's really no such thing as a Palestinian," adding that the national identity had been created as "a political tool to try to force land away from Israel".

Huckabee has been an outspoken advocate for Israel's annexation of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. "I think Israel has title deed to Judea and Samaria," he told [Politico](#) in 2017, using the Hebrew language terms for the occupied West Bank.

Huckabee was an evangelical pastor before he rose to the top of Arkansas politics. However, his interest in Israel and the Middle East stemmed from a trip to the region when he was 17 years old, travelling across Greece, Syria and Israel.

In one interview, Huckabee fondly recounted seeing "great-looking Israeli girls in bikinis, just showing off and flirting" when he arrived at the Jordan River.

He has rejected the two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine question outright, saying that to prevent Israeli Jews from being a minority in one state, there should be an "aggressive interest in bringing Jews from around the world to the homeland."

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