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Jared Kushner in Bahrain

Photo: Reuters

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Kushner in Bahrain: No Palestinian prosperity without fair political solution

Trump's son-in-law and White House advisor says president has not forgotten the Palestinian people, but adds that political issues not on the agenda at two-day summit aimed at showcasing economic portion of Washington's long-awaited Arab-Israeli peace plan, dubbed 'the deal of the century'

News Agencies, Ynet|Published: 06.25.19 , 19:28

Senior White House adviser Jared Kushner said on Tuesday that prosperity for the Palestinians was not possible without a fair political solution - but that agreement on an economic way forward was a necessary precondition for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Kushner was addressing the opening of a workshop in Bahrain to showcase the economic portion of Washington's long-awaited Arab-Israeli peace plan, dubbed "the deal of the century," a \$50 billion development blueprint unveiled this week that has been sharply criticised by Palestinians and Arabs across the region.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin and White House advisor Jared Kushner at the workshop on Palestinian economic prospects in Bahrain, June 25, 2019 (Photo: Reuters)

"What we have developed is the most comprehensive economic plan ever created specifically for the Palestinians and the broader Middle East," he told an audience that included International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde.

Also in attendance were business people from around the world, including Israelis and Palestinians, although neither side has any official representation.

"We can turn this region from a victim of past conflicts into a model for commerce and advancement throughout the world," Kushner said.

The lack of a political solution, which Washington has said will be unveiled later, has prompted rejection not only from Palestinians but in Arab countries with which Israel seeks to normalize relations. Neither the Israeli nor Palestinian governments were attending the curtain-raising event in Manama.

"My direct message to the Palestinian people is that, despite what those who have let you down in the past say, President Trump and America have not given up on you. This workshop is for you," Kushner said.

He said economic growth and prosperity for the Palestinians were not possible without an "enduring and fair political solution" to the conflict - one that guaranteed Israel's security and respected the dignity of the Palestinian people.

"However, today is not about the political issues. We will get to those at the right time," he said.

Yoav Mordechai (left), an Israeli businessman and former coordinator of Israeli activities in the Palestinian Territories, in Bahrain on June 25, 2019

Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Jordan and various Gulf states have sent finance officials to the workshop. The White House says it did not invite Israeli representatives, so as to keep the event "apolitical."

The Palestinian Authority, for its part, has rejected the plan and wants nothing to do with the conference, arguing that an economic proposal cannot pre-empt a political resolution that addresses its long-standing demand for statehood.

Erekat: Bahrain workshop is a joke

Ex-PA negotiator says he heard about two-day conference aimed to boost Palestinian economy by watching CNN; slams American officials Kushner and Friedman for lack of balance as mediators

Alexandra Lukash|Published: 06.24.19, 14:37

The U.S.-led economic workshop starting Tuesday in Bahrain as part of the first part of the American Mideast peace plan is a "joke," PLO Executive Committee Chairman Saeb Erekat told Ynet on Monday.

Erekat also said he discovered the existence of the workshop by watching CNN with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

"You know how I found out about this workshop? I saw it on CNN with my president, who looked at me and said, 'Saeb, what is this?' I said that I did not know, they did not even bother to consult with us. (Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu, (U.S. official Jared) Kushner, (U.S. Ambassador to Israel David) Friedman – they know what is best for us, they want to decide for me."

The Palestinian Authority said soon after it would boycott the conference Bahraini capital Manama soon after it was announced. The White House later said that no Israeli officials would be invited either so as to ensure that the event was not political.

A number of Arab states will be in attendance, including Egypt and Jordan, who both said that conference aside, the only solution to the Mideast Palestinian conflict is a two-state solution with East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.

Erekat told Ynet that he met with American representatives 37 times in 2017 and that every American proposal was taken into consideration, but then U.S. aid to the Palestinians was cut without warning.

"They decided out of the blue to cut \$350 million from the aid package," Erekat said. "We have 544,000 students in the refugee camps in Jerusalem, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. They cut all the aid from the American aid agency (USAID) and leaving 112 unfinished projects.

"Furthermore, they cut aid to hospitals in Jerusalem. These people are trying to create a situation in which my students have no education (and) people are without medical treatment. They are so cruel."

So nothing will come out of the conference in Bahrain?

"They are planning a \$50 billion investment to be paid in 10 years, not now. We have to take control of our land in the West Bank. We have to take control of our beaches at the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean; we have to control our natural resources.

"If you allow us to do that, it would end the occupation (and), I would not need a single dollar from anyone. We don't need people to come and say, 'We know what's good for you.' "

Is the Trump government is trying to bribe you?

"When you are the mediator, you need to be balanced. These people have nothing to do with balance. The Americans are here to do one thing - to destroy the two-state solution. I have devoted my life to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. If we and the Israelis don't take care of ourselves, no one else will. It all depends on Israelis and Palestinians alone. "

"I want to have peace with the Israelis, I want you to be my neighbors. This is our proposal to you. What is your proposal? What is Netanyahu proposing? He comes to my country with Friedman and they intend to declare the Jordan Valley part of Israel after Jerusalem? After the Golan?

"This is a display of power, corruption, hypocrisy, occupation. These people are dragging you down into places that are not good."

Pompeo sets out to build global coalition against Iran

Upon departure from Washington Pompeo said: 'The goal of his talks with the Saudi kingdom and the UAE is to deny Iran the resources to foment terror, to build out their nuclear weapon system, to build out their missile program'

Associated Press|Published: 06.24.19, 08:28

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he wants to build a global coalition against Iran during urgent consultations in the Middle East, following a week of crisis that saw the United States pull back from the brink of a military strike on Iran.

Pompeo spoke Sunday as he left Washington for Saudi Arabia, followed by the United Arab Emirates, Sunni Arab allies that are alarmed by Shiite Iran's increasing assertiveness and are working to limit its influence in the region.

His stops in Jeddah and Abu Dhabi were hastily arranged late last week as additions to a trip to India from where he will join President Donald Trump in Japan and South Korea.

But they were not announced until immediately before his departure in a sign of fast-moving and unpredictable developments.

"We'll be talking with them about how to make sure that we are all strategically aligned, and how we can build out a global coalition, a coalition not only throughout the Gulf states, but in Asia and in Europe, that understands this challenge as it is prepared to push back against the world's largest state sponsor of terror," Pompeo said about Iran.

But even as Pompeo delivered his tough talk, he echoed President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence in saying the U.S. is prepared to negotiate with Iran, without preconditions, in a bid to ease tensions. Those tensions have been mounting since Trump last year withdrew the U.S. from a global nuclear deal with Iran and began pressuring Tehran with economic sanctions. A fresh round of Iran sanctions is to be announced Monday in a bid to force the Iranian leadership into talks.

"They know precisely how to find us," Pompeo said.

It was a week of topsy-turvy pronouncements on U.S. policy toward Iran that careened between the bellicose, the conciliatory and back again after Iran shot down an American military drone and boasted it would not bow to Washington's pressure.

Trump initially said Iran had made a "very big mistake" and that it was "hard to believe" that shooting down the drone on Thursday was not intentional. He later said he thought it was an unintentional act carried out by a "loose and stupid" Iranian and called off retaliatory military strikes against Iran. On Saturday, Trump reversed himself and claimed that Iran had acted "knowingly."

But Trump also said over the weekend that he appreciated Iran's decision to not shoot down a manned U.S. spy plane, and he opined about eventually becoming Iran's "best

friend" if Tehran ultimately agrees to abandon its drive to build nuclear weapons and he helps the country turn around its crippled economy.

Then Trump's national security adviser, John Bolton, stepped in Sunday with a blunt warning from Jerusalem, where he was traveling.

Bolton said Iran should not "mistake U.S. prudence and discretion for weakness" after Trump called off the military strike. Trump said he backed away from the planned strikes after learning that about 150 people would be killed, but he said the military option remained.

A longtime Iran hawk, Bolton emphasized that the U.S. reserved the right to attack at a later point.

"No one has granted them a hunting license in the Middle East. As President Trump said on Friday our military is rebuilt, new and ready to go," Bolton said during an appearance with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, himself a longtime and outspoken Iran critic.

On Sunday, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani blamed the United States' "interventionist military presence" for fanning the flames. He was quoted by the official IRNA news agency. Shortly thereafter, Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen launched an attack against an airport in southern Saudi Arabia, killing one person and wounding seven others, according to the Saudi military. Such attacks have been cited by Saudi and U.S. officials as examples of Iran's "malign behavior" in the Middle East.

Pompeo, who addressed reporters from the tarmac before he boarded his airplane in Washington, declared the goal of his talks with the Saudi kingdom and the UAE is to deny Iran "the resources to foment terror, to build out their nuclear weapon system, to build out their missile program."

"We are going to deny them the resources they need to do that, thereby keep American interests and American people safe all around the world," said Pompeo, who was due to arrive in the region after one person was killed and seven others were wounded in an attack by Iranian-allied Yemeni rebels on an airport in Saudi Arabia on Sunday evening, the Saudi military said.

The downing of the unmanned aircraft marked a new high in the rising tensions between the United States and Iran. The Trump administration has vowed to combine a "maximum pressure" campaign of economic sanctions with a buildup of American forces in the region, following the U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers.

U.S. military cyber forces on Thursday launched a strike against Iranian military computer systems, according to U.S. officials. The cyberattacks disabled Iranian

Revolutionary Guard Corps computer systems that controlled its rocket and missile launchers, the officials said.

Throughout the recent crisis, Trump has wavered between bellicose language and actions toward Iran and a more accommodating tone, including a plea for negotiations. Iran has said it is not interested in a dialogue with Trump. His administration is aiming to cripple Iran's economy and force policy changes by re-imposing sanctions, including on Iranian

Kushner's economic plan for Mideast peace faces broad Arab rejection

Across the board Arab commentators agree the peace plan will fail with no political solution that insures justice for the Palestinians

Reuters|Published: 06.23.19 , 08:50

U.S. President Donald Trump's economic vision as part of the wider plan to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was met with contempt, repudiation and exasperation in the Arab world, even as some in the Gulf called for it to be given a chance.

\ The \$50 billion "peace to prosperity" plan, set to be presented by Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner at a conference in Bahrain next week, envisions a global investment fund to lift the Palestinian and neighboring Arab state economies.

But the lack of a political solution, which Washington has said would be unveiled later, prompted rejection not only from Palestinians but also in Arab countries that Israel would seek normal relations with.

From Sudan to Kuwait, prominent commentators and ordinary citizens denounced Kushner's proposals in strikingly similar terms: "colossal waste of time," "non-starter," "dead on arrival."

"Homelands cannot be sold, even for all the money in the world," Egyptian analyst Gamal Fahmy said. "This plan is the brainchild of real estate brokers, not politicians. Even Arab states that are described as moderate are not able to openly express support for it."

Commentator Sarkis Naoum at Lebanon's An-Nahar newspaper said, "This economic plan, like others, won't succeed because it has no political foundation."

While the precise outline of the political plan has been shrouded with secrecy, officials briefed on it say Kushner has jettisoned the two-state solution - the long-standing worldwide formula that envisages an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza.

The PLO has dismissed Kushner's plans as "all abstract promises," insisting that only a political solution will solve the problem. It said they were an attempt to bribe the Palestinians into accepting Israeli occupation.

Jawad al-Anani, a former senior Jordanian politician, described widespread suspicion after Trump's decisions to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and recognize Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights.

"This is an unbalanced approach: it assumes the Palestinians are the more vulnerable side and they are the ones who can succumb to pressure more easily," he said. "This is a major setback for the whole region."

Azzam Huneidi, deputy head of Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood, the country's main opposition said: "The economic plan is the sale of Palestine under the banner of prosperity in return for peace and with no land being returned ... and with the bulk of the funds shouldered by Gulf Arab states ... A deal with Arab money."

The **Jerusalem Post Diplomatic Conference** is a prestigious **forum in the presence of the Prime Minister of Israel**, where some 400 ambassadors, ambassadorial spokespeople and military attachés from around the world will convene.

The purpose of the Diplomatic Conference is to strengthen Israel's public relations among diplomats residing in Israel.

The Diplomatic Conference will be covered by dozens of international and Israeli media groups, and will receive broad coverage in all Jerusalem Post media outlets including:

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- Jpost.com, the number one English-language news website in the Jewish world
- Internationally circulated newspapers and magazines.
- Ma'ariv daily newspaper and Ma'ariv online website.

Jerusalem Post Arab-Israeli Conflict

CHILEAN PRESIDENT APOLOGIZES FOR TEMPLE MOUNT VISIT WITH PALESTINIANS

Israel had agreed that Piñera could go up to the Temple Mount, known to Muslims as al-Haram al-Sharif - but presumed he would do so, as is customary, together with Wakf officials.

The Dome of the Rock is seen in the background as Chilean President Sebastian Pinera and his wife Cecilia Morel walk on the compound known to Muslims as Noble Sanctuary and to Jews as Temple Mount, during their visit to Jerusalem's Old City **June 25, 2019.**

Chilean President Sebastián Piñera **apologized to his Israeli counterpart** President Reuven Rivlin **for allowing Palestinian officials to accompany him during his Temple Mount visit** on Tuesday.

Rivlin's spokesperson confirmed that an apology had been issued during Piñera's visit with Rivlin on Wednesday. Earlier in day, the Foreign Ministry reprimanded Chilean Ambassador Rodrigo Fernandez over the visit.

COGAT tells Palestinians terrorism is what cuts their electricity short
Israel stops fuel transfer to Gaza following 13 fires on border

Israel had agreed that Piñera could go up to the Temple Mount – known to Palestinians as al-Haram al-Sharif – but the Foreign Ministry presumed he would do so, as is customary, together with Wakf officials.

Under the Oslo Accords, the site is controlled by the Wakf and is not under the purview of the Palestinian Authority.

Foreign Minister Yisrael Katz said that the government “takes seriously any infringement of Israeli sovereignty on the Temple Mount, especially one that violates an agreed upon procedure,” the Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Wednesday.

“We must distinguish between absolute freedom of worship that Israel safeguards” and “ensuring that our sovereignty over the Temple Mount is not harmed,” the statement continued.

Later in the day, the ministry said it had received a formal apology letter from the Chilean Embassy explaining that Piñera's visit was a private one. The embassy clarified that Piñera had not invited the Palestinian officials to join him and had not even known that they were there, the ministry said.

Rivlin spoke with Piñera about the importance of Israeli sovereignty over the site, and in Jerusalem in general, when the two men met at Rivlin's residence in Jerusalem.

“Jerusalem has been the capital of the Jewish people since the days of King David,” Rivlin said. “Our historical connection to Jerusalem, and our sovereignty in Jerusalem, make us responsible for preserving Jerusalem as a city of faith and peace,” he added.

Rivlin asked Piñera to speak with the PA about supporting the US economic plan that it unveiled in Bahrain. The Chilean president is scheduled to meet with PA officials on Thursday before flying out of Ben-Gurion International Airport.

“The gaps between us and the Palestinians are great, but we must begin with small steps of cooperation, and not to boycott or refuse plans that will improve our economic and social situation. We must cooperate in every field where we can work together. That is the only way,” Rivlin said.

Rivlin told Piñera that he has frequent conversations with PA President Mahmoud Abbas, who had called to offer his condolences upon the death of his wife Nechama earlier this month.

Piñera thanked Rivlin for his desire to “find the path to peace and harmony with the Palestinian people. I know that you have always asked for peace in the Holy Land. It is a land sacred to a very large part of mankind: the capital of the three monotheistic religions.

“This is the place for a meeting where the three religions can cooperate with each other. Despite the differences, what unites humanity is the fact that we are all the children of God,” the Chilean president added.

He also visited the Western Wall and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on Tuesday. At both of those sites, he was accompanied by an official from the Foreign Ministry’s guest department.

Piñera is scheduled to meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday afternoon.

Israeli-Chilean ties date back to 1949. The country has a small Jewish community of some 20,000 people. It is also home to half a million Palestinians and has recognized Palestine as a state since 2011.

In November, the Chilean Congress gave the nod to a resolution calling on the government to boycott settlements; to re-examine past agreements with Israel; and to ensure that all future agreements with Israel are confined to within the Green Line.

Out of respect for Rivlin, Piñera came without his wife, because according to protocol, if the host has no spouse, guests refrain from bringing theirs. At the outset of his own statement, Piñera voiced his condolences to Rivlin, saying that he remembered when Rivlin and his wife had visited Chile.

Commenting that relations between Israel and Chile over the past 70 years have had their ups and downs, Rivlin said that the relationship went back to before the establishment of the State of Israel when righteous Chileans rescued Jews fleeing from the Nazis.

Speaking of commonalities between their countries, Rivlin reminded Piñera that their countries had each gained accession to the OECD in the same year. Both, against all odds, have developed stable economies; both have turned agriculture into a profitable enterprise; and both work together on water management, communications, space research and satellites, cyber security and more.

Piñera last visited Israel in 2011 during his previous stint as president. In speaking with Rivlin, he referred to Israel as “a wonderful country.”

The Chilean president said that he looks forward to signing agreements on satellites, water management, solar energy and cyber security. The visit is expected to be very fruitful, he added.

Direct flights between Chile and Israel have boosted tourism in both directions, Rivlin noted. While neither country is exactly rich in natural resources, each, through innovation, has managed to take advantage of what nature has to offer.

Aware that Chile has suffered extensively from drought over the past decade, Rivlin said that Israel knows how to create moisture out of the air.

”We have much to learn from each other,” he said.

Jerusalem Post

Arab-Israeli Conflict

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BY TOVAH LAZAROFF, GREER FAY CASHMAN

JUNE 26, 2019 19:17

The Dome of the Rock is seen in the background as Chilean President Sebastian Pinera and his wife Cecilia Morel walk on the compound known to Muslims as Noble Sanctuary and to Jews as Temple Mount, during their visit to Jerusalem's Old City June 25, 2019. (photo credit: REUTERS/AMMAR AWAD)

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