Kosovo establishes Israel ties, to open embassy in Jerusalem

Israel's Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi, left, signs a joint declaration establishing ties with Kosovo during an official ceremony held over Zoom with his counterpart from Kosovo Meliza Haradinaj Stublla (on screen). (Photo: Menahem Kahana / AFP)

Jerusalem, February 1 (RHC)-- Israel and Kosovo established diplomatic ties on Monday, with the Muslim-majority country recognising Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. In a ceremony held over Zoom in Jerusalem and Pristina, Israeli Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi and his counterpart from Kosovo, Meliza Haradinaj Stublla, signed a joint declaration establishing ties.

The normalisation and embassy moves come after Israel last year inked a series of deals brokered by former U.S. President Donald Trump to establish diplomatic relations with Arab states, including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan. Those agreements, known collectively as the Abraham Accords, triggered criticism in many majority-Muslim countries.

But unlike Kosovo, the Arab parties to the Abraham Accords have all maintained that their diplomatic missions in Israel will be in Tel Aviv. That position is in line with global consensus against recognising Jerusalem as Israel's capital until the Palestinian conflict is resolved.

Trump in 2017 shocked observers by saying the United States would move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The embassy move in May the following year, from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, was celebrated in Israel but roundly criticised elsewhere.

To date, Guatemala is the only other country besides the United States that operates an embassy in Jerusalem. Jerusalem remains at the heart of the decades-long Middle East conflict, with the Palestinian Authority (PA) insisting that East Jerusalem – illegally occupied by Israel since 1967 – should serve as the capital of a Palestinian state.

The incoming administration of President Joe Biden has said it will keep the U.S. embassy in Israel in Jerusalem, and continue to recognize the city as Israel's capital.

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