

Two Embassies in one City?: One in Yerushalaim (Israel) and the Other in Al Quds (Palestine)- A Latin American Action Forcing Event

(Summary of an article published in La Nacion, Costa Rica by Otton Solis (OS), a recognized academic and leader of the opposition in the last three elections)

CONSIDERATIONS:

- 1) The re-election of President Obama will present few new prospects for the advancement of an Israeli/Palestinian Peace
- 2) Costa Rica has a standing and reputation as a peacebuilder much above its small size and population, and should make its contribution.
- 3) In past years Costa Rica has been seen as supporter of Israel first and the Palestinians. The perception was of a zero/sum game, Presidents had to choose.
- 4) OS have been on record (see article in La Nacion in 2004) that there are ways that we could help with a win/win to both sides. Not only help Obama but also act together with other Latin America countries such as Brazil.
- 5) One of the most difficult issues in the peace process, we all know is the status of Jerusalem. Here a "made in Costa Rica" out of the box idea, validated when consulting Israeli and Palestinian academics and local diplomats. Here it is:

The Idea:

- A) There should be 2 Latin American Embassies in Jerusalem: one in Israel's capital Yerushalaim (back in the past all had always their residence and offices in West Jerusalem). And, the second in the Palestinian Al Quds, (in East Jerusalem).
- B) Now that the vast majority of UN members - including Latin Americans- recognize the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a non-member state, then the Latin American representations could be also called "Embassies" as in Israel, and could be at this stage located outside the actual Wall/fence built by Israel a few years ago. The missions could most likely be near Al Quds University and/or the

Palestinian Legislative Council in Abu Dis which remains outside the perimeter established unilaterally by Israel but surely shows the full presence of Palestinian institutions.

- C) Such move should not affect the status quo on borders and in particular the Old City, that has been seen by most countries as part of the "corpus separatum" (UNSCOP Partition Plan, 1947), pending peace negotiation on final status issues.
- D) There have been for years several countries with representation both in East and West Jerusalem, as consulates, either one for both or two separate buildings (UK, USA) so Israeli governments have been accepting for decades such unclear status quo. Ambivalence? There are Latin American diplomats living in Israel and accredited both as part of their mission in Tel Aviv by Israel and as ambassadors by the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah.
- E) There is no question that the Israeli Government would like to see all Latin American back to Jerusalem [in 1981 there were still 10 Latin American embassies and one Dutch left in the city- the exception were Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Cuba, the latter till severing relations in 1973, their embassies being always in Tel Aviv). Several embassies were established in Katamon and Rehavia neighborhoods empty residences offered to them at nominal or no rent.
- F) The open question is how the Israeli and Palestinian governments would officially react towards two embassies in the same city, with now a second representation OUTSIDE the wall/fence built by Israel. Ambivalence? And if one or both unofficially negotiated and accept as a *fait a*

compris? The Latin American governments can take unilaterally and collectively such a decision to move on with this plan once one or both governments may "live with it".

- G) In terms of public opinion, the book "Negotiating Jerusalem" by Jerome Segal et al, shows -albeit more than a decade ago- that most Jews answering the polls, would not mind to exclude from Yerushalaim [they were asked in Hebrew, not in English) the heavily populated Arab neighborhoods such as Azaryeh, Abu Dis, Bet Hanina, Shoafat and other refugee camps {mostly because of concerns with the demographic balance, now the population of Jerusalem as a whole is approximately 2/3 Jewish and 1/3 Palestinian).
- H) The PA that considers many such neighborhoods as an integral part of Al Quds, their capital, as they have established some major institutions there. Even if Palestinians would aspire to recover areas now separated from their control by the Wall, it could be seen as a step forward by moderate elements of both sides.
- I) Latin American states have been closely involved in the UN Partition Plan (UNSCOP 1947) and in the wording of Security Council Res. 242 (Latin American Resolution passed against the Yugoslavian sponsored Res.). In line with this precedent, Latin American countries could make a contribution towards the two state solutions and recognizing the just claims of both parties to a capital [as Costa Rican sociologist Miguel Zuniga article has stressed in an article published in the same newspaper a few years ago].
- 6) This is one of many potential examples of "action forcing events", when decision that can be adopted

by third parties can trigger the Palestinians Israelis out of the impasse. These are external events or stipulations created in the course of negotiation or mediation, that are designed to force parties to take steps toward reaching or implementing an agreement." [Michael Watkins and Susan Rosegrant]. Action-forcing events are clear breakpoints in negotiation imposed by outside forces or by the actions of negotiators, that force some or all of the participants to make hard choices or incur substantial costs

J) It does not have to wait till the elusive end of a peace process. It could be done now by all of us, peace seeking Latin American states. And it could be an example to be followed by other regional networks

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