

# Newsbytes

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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

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## More Countries Catching Trump’s Jerusalem Wave

A dozen nations lining up to recognize capital city

by Bob Unruh

Jerusalem, after being snubbed by the international community for decades, may soon may have an “embassy row.”

Since President Donald Trump announced he will allow a 1995 law finally to effect, recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, other nations are following his lead.

Over the weekend, Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales revealed on his official Facebook account his country will move its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. Morales said he instructed his country’s foreign ministry to “initiate the process to make it possible.”

His decision comes on the heels of a vote in the United Nations in which Guatemala and handful of other small nations opposed the 128-country majority that condemned Trump’s decision.

The vote prompted warnings from U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley that the U.S. was “taking names.” The U.S. said Monday it already has decided to cut funding for the international group by \$285 million.

The U.S. is the largest contributor to the U.N., writing checks for about 22 percent of the global body’s budget each year.

The Hill reported the Czech Republic said it will recognize West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. “The Czech Republic together with other EU member states, following the EU Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions, considers Jerusalem to be future capital of both states, meaning the state of Israel and the future state of Palestine,” the Czech Foreign Ministry explained in a statement.

The government statement made clear it only was recognizing the western part of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, the part that Israel held before seizing control of the rest in the Six-Day War of 1967, when multiple Muslim neighbors attacked. But the Czech Republic, nevertheless, broke with other European Union members who do not recognize Jerusalem at all.

Turkey said it hopes to open an embassy “to a Palestinian state” in East Jerusalem.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has tried to generate international condemnation for Trump's decision.

He even called a summit of Islamic radicals after Trump's announcement was released.

Israel's Ynet News reports Honduras and Paraguay are "expected to join" the move to place embassies in Jerusalem.

And the Times of Israel reported Israel Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely says at least 10 nations are discussing the idea.

"In an interview with Israel Radio, she declined to say which states Israel was speaking with, but Channel 10 reported that the next country likely to announce an embassy move was Honduras," the report said.

Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez was elected to another term just a few weeks ago and has links to Israel.

"Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein announced at a Likud party event Monday that the parliamentary heads of two other countries had spoken to him about moving their embassies from Tel Aviv. The Walla news site reported that representatives from Romania and Slovakia had expressed support for such a move and were working in their respective countries to effect it," the Times of Israel said.

Also, Togo is considering recognizing Jerusalem and Russia recognized West Jerusalem in April. NPR reported Morales' announcement made Guatemala the first country to formally and without conditions follow Trump's lead. When Trump made his announcement, WND commentator Michael Brown cited seven reasons listed by pundit Ben Shapiro that Trump's decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem is right, calling it "an act of not only political bravery but moral courage."

Brown speculated whether there was spiritual significance to the decision.

He explained: "In reality, Trump is not declaring war in the Middle East, not declaring war against 1.5 billion Muslims and in no way, shape, size or form declaring war on hundreds of millions of Christians. In fact, the very notion that Christians will not accept 'the holy shrines' being 'totally under the hegemony of Israel' is absolute nonsense.

He pointed out that America's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital "changes nothing on the ground at all, especially when it comes to the Christian holy sites, which have been under Israeli hegemony for decades."

"Second, it is under Jewish hegemony that Middle Eastern Christians have access to these holy sites and freedom to practice their faith. The restrictions generally come under Islamic, not Israeli rule."

He noted that "every other nation on the planet chooses its capital city, and the other nations recognize that city and put their embassies there. Why won't the rest of the world recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital? Why are the embassies located in Tel Aviv rather than Jerusalem?"

"Jerusalem is the historic capital of the Jewish people, going back to roughly 1000 B.C. Jews face Jerusalem when they pray, and synagogues in the West face east, while every year at Passover, the hopeful prayer is recited, 'Next year in Jerusalem!' And in terms of functional reality, Jerusalem is the capital of the nation. There's nothing to discuss or debate. That's reality, plain and simple.

President Trump warned ahead of the vote that the U.N. and nations that supported the resolution should expect consequences. A total of 128 voted in favor of it.

“They take hundreds of millions of dollars and even billions of dollars, and then they vote against us. Well, we’re watching those votes. Let them vote against us. We’ll save a lot. We don’t care,” he said Wednesday. “This isn’t like it used to be where they could vote against you and then you pay them hundreds of millions of dollars and nobody knows what they’re doing.

“People are tired of the United States – people that live here that are great citizens that love this country – they’re tired of this country being taken advantage of. And we’re not going to be taken advantage of any longer.”

The president said he was recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and that the U.S. will move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, though the timing is uncertain.

He explained the decision was “nothing more or less than a recognition of reality” and that the move should not be interpreted as a departure from the U.S. stance of working toward a peaceful “two-state solution” to the age-old Arab-Israeli conflict.

Famed legal mind Alan Dershowitz wrote at the Gatestone Institute site that it simply is “beyond the jurisdiction of the U.N. to tell a sovereign nation what it can and cannot recognize.” He pointed out that the entire brouhaha was brought on by former President Obama’s personal animus against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

“The resolution fails to recognize that it was the December 2016 Security Council Resolution – the one engineered by lame duck President Barack Obama – that changed the status of Jerusalem and complicated the efforts to achieve a compromise peace. Before that benighted resolution, Jerusalem’s Western Wall, the Jewish Quarter and the access roads to Hebrew University and Hadassah Hospital were widely recognized as part of Israel – or at worst, as disputed territory.

“Everyone knew that any peace agreement would inevitably recognize that these historically Jewish areas as an indigenous part of Israel. They were certainly not illegally occupied by Israel, any more than Bethlehem was illegally occupied by the Palestinian Authority (PA). Both Jerusalem and Bethlehem had originally been deemed part of an international zone by the United Nations when it divided the British mandate into two states for two people – a decision accepted by Israel and rejected by all the Arab nations and the Palestinian Arabs in the area. Jordan then attacked Israel and illegally occupied the Western Wall and Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem.”

“Until Obama engineered the notorious December 2016 Security Council Resolution that declared the Western Wall, the Jewish Quarter and the access roads to be illegally occupied by Israel, thus changing the status quo. This unwarranted change – long opposed by United States administrations – made a negotiated peace more difficult, because it handed the Jewish holy places over to the Palestinians without getting any concessions in return, thus requiring that Israel ‘buy’ them back in any negotiation,” Dershowitz wrote.

He asked: “Why did Obama change the status quo to the disadvantage of Israel? Congress did not want the change. The American people did not support the change. Many in the Obama administration opposed it. Even some members of the Security Council who voted for the resolution did not want the change. Obama did it as lame duck revenge against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whom he hated. His motive was personal, not patriotic. His decision was bad for America, for peace and for America’s ally, Israel. He never would have done it except as a lame duck with no political accountability and no checks and balances.”

The start of Trump's response didn't take long, with Haley's weekend confirmation the U.S. was cutting \$285 million from the U.N.

"The inefficiency and overspending of the United Nations are well known," Haley said. "We will no longer let the generosity of the American people be taken advantage of or remain unchecked."

She also said it's a first step in the right direction.

## 2017 could tie record for billion-dollar disasters in a year

Doyle Rice, Jim Sergent, George Petras, Janet Loehrke, USA TODAY

A hurricane dumped record rainfall on Texas, another left nearly all of Puerto Rico without electricity and intense wildfires killed more than 40 people in California — all in just the past two months.

So far this year, 15 separate weather and climate disasters have each caused at least \$1 billion in damages in the U.S., according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Initial estimates from AccuWeather put the damage from the northern California wildfires at well over \$1 billion. If so, 2017 would tie 2011 for the most billion-dollar disasters, according to NOAA.

This year's devastating hurricane season is largely to blame. Hurricane Harvey will likely end up topping all of this year's disasters with an estimated price tag of \$190 billion. The official death toll, now at 48, in Puerto Rico from Hurricane Maria could rise into the hundreds, according to a report Wednesday from Vox.

Hurricane Irma ravaged the Caribbean island of Dominica as Category 5 monster, destroying most of the island's structures and leaving the infrastructure in ruins. It then took aim on the U.S. Virgin Islands and eventually the U.S. mainland. It was also was a Category 5 storm for longer than all other Atlantic hurricanes on record except Ivan in 2004.

Maria's savage swipe across Puerto Rico caused a catastrophe that will take months, if not years, for the island to recover from. In all, three Category-4 hurricanes (Harvey, Irma and Maria) made landfall in the U.S. and its territories, a record for a single year.

Earlier in the year, tornadoes and severe storms caused most of the death and destruction, with seven separate outbreaks that each caused at least \$1 billion in damage. In all, tornadoes killed 34 Americans from January to May.

Here are some of the notable disasters of 2017. Unless noted, all damage estimates and fatalities are from NOAA.

### **Tornadoes**

As of Oct. 8, based on preliminary data from the Storm Prediction Center, 1,391 tornadoes have torn through the U.S. — 332 more than in all of 2016.

Southern tornadoes: Jan. 20-22

Deaths: 24

Estimated cost: \$1.1 billion

Authorities said 79 tornadoes swept across Gulf states and South Carolina. It was the third-most number of tornadoes to occur in a single wintertime outbreak.

Central/Southeast tornadoes: Feb. 28-March 1

Deaths: 6

Estimated cost: \$1.8 billion

More than 70 tornadoes swept across the central and southern states, causing widespread damage.

Midwest tornadoes: March 6-8

Deaths: 2

Estimated cost: \$2.1 billion

Eleven states sustained damage by a series of tornadoes that marched across the Midwest.

## Floods

California floods: Feb. 8-22

Deaths: 5

Estimated cost: \$1.5 billion

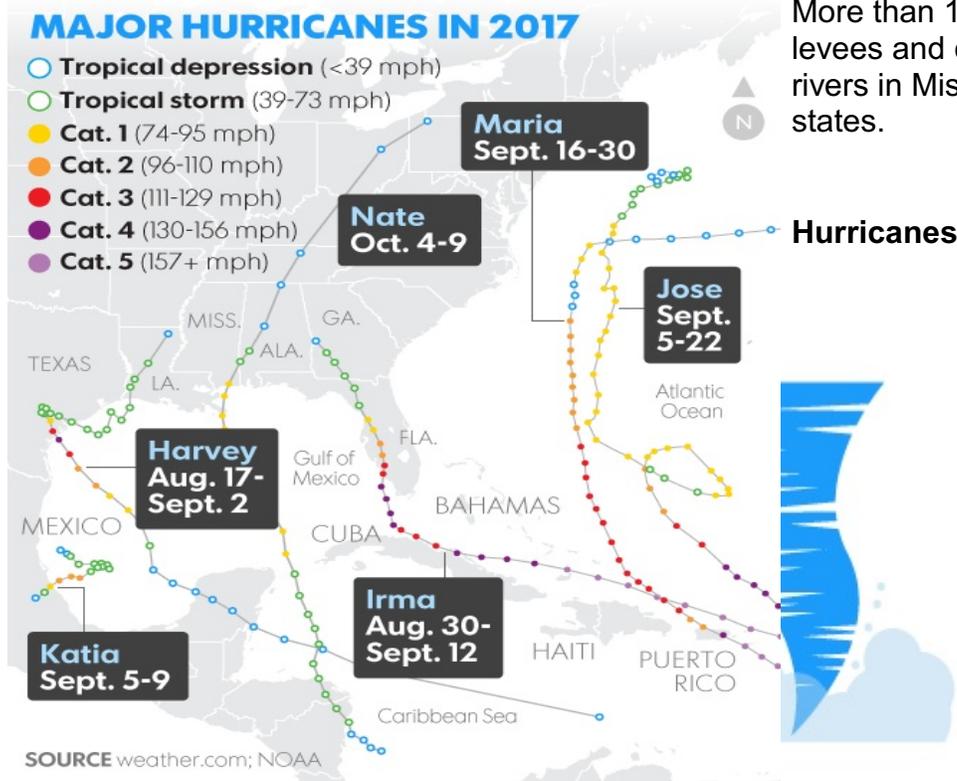
Heavy rain across northern and central California caused massive damage from floods, landslides and erosion. About 188,000 residents were evacuated when the Oroville Dam spillway was damaged.

Missouri/Arkansas floods: April 25-May 7

Deaths: 20

Estimated cost: \$1.7 billion

More than 15 inches of rainfall breached levees and caused disastrous flooding along rivers in Missouri, Arkansas, Illinois and other states.



Hurricane Harvey: Aug. 25-31  
Deaths: 84  
AccuWeather damage estimate: \$190 billion

Harvey, a Category 4 hurricane, struck near Rockport, Texas, and caused extensive damage. Houston and surrounding areas were drenched with torrential rain and experienced record flood levels. Some 6.9 million people were inundated under 30 inches of rain, while another 1.25 million received 45 inches.

NOTE As of Oct. 8

SOURCE NOAA; Storm Prediction Center

As much as 50 inches was calculated for yet another 11,000 residents.

Hurricane Irma: Sept. 6-12

Deaths: 95

Moody's Analytics estimated damage: \$64 billion-\$92 billion

Irma, a Category 5 hurricane at its height, swept through the Virgin Islands and hit Cudjoe Key, Fla., as a Category 4. It destroyed one-quarter of the buildings on the Florida Keys. The Florida and South Carolina coasts reported significant damage. Irma maintained a maximum sustained wind of 187 mph for 37 hours, the longest in the satellite era that began in the 1960s.

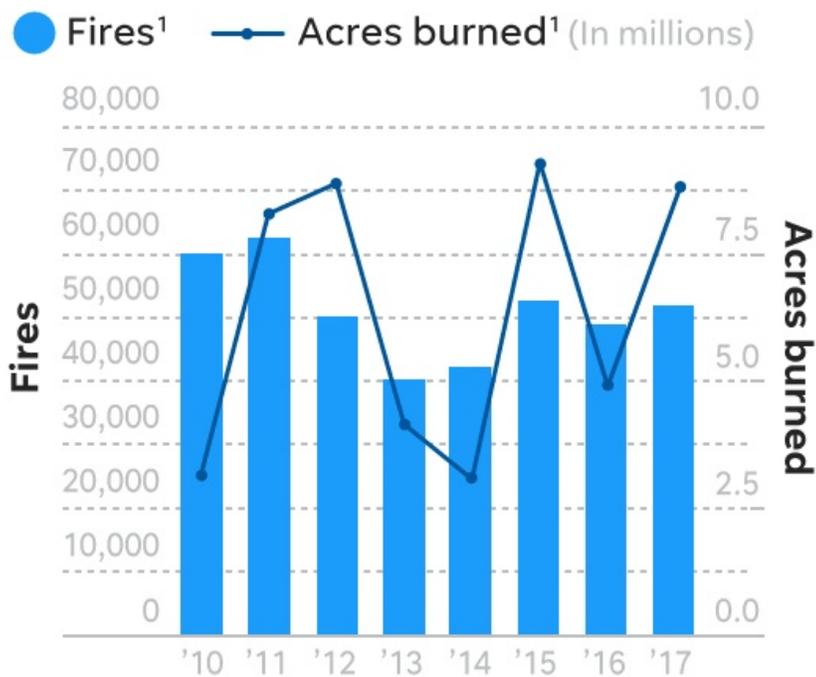
Hurricane Maria: Sept. 19-27

Deaths: 38

AIR Worldwide estimate of insured losses: \$40-\$80 billion

Maria, a Category 4 hurricane, hit southeastern Puerto Rico and caused unprecedented devastation to the island and its infrastructure. Rainfall of up to 37 inches caused flooding and mudslides. Maria matched 2005's Hurricane Wilma for most rapid buildup, going from a tropical storm to a Category 5 hurricane in just 54 hours.

## Wildfires



1 - As of Oct. 17

SOURCE National Interagency Fire Center

For the 2017 wildfire season, although the U.S. is below average in terms of number of fires, it's far above average for acres burned.

California wildfires: Oct. 8 to present

Deaths: 42 deaths

CoreLogic estimated cost: \$65 billion

More than 8,000 firefighters continue to battle multiple wildfires that have burned more than 210,000 acres in Northern California, destroying thousands of homes and forcing evacuations in the state's wine region. At least 13 large wildfires remained active on Wednesday, according to CalFire.

Source: NOAA