
US envoy smashes wall dug under Palestinian homes in E. Jerusalem with SLEDGEHAMMER

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Top US diplomats, one responsible for Middle East peace efforts, were filmed frantically hammering a wall to finish a controversial Israeli tunnel running close to the most divisive holy sites in annexed East Jerusalem.

Ambassador David Friedman and Middle East peace envoy Jason Greenblatt, showed up on Sunday at the unveiling of what the Israelis call an underground *"pilgrimage road"* located right next to the contested Temple Mount.

The tunnel, excavated beneath the mostly Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan, was officially opened with the ceremonial smashing of a brick wall which served to replace the traditional ribbon-cutting. US ambassador Israel Friedman swung the first hammer.

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Digging of the 350-meter *"pilgrimage road,"* promoted and funded by a local rightwing group, occurred disturbingly close to a highly-sensitive area of East Jerusalem's Temple Mount, which houses a number of Jewish sites but also the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock.

The dig had also started without the permission of the Silwan residents living overhead. It has been reported that some Palestinian families even had to leave their houses because of cracks and destruction caused by the excavations.

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Naturally, Palestinians have fiercely criticized the symbolism behind a US ambassador swinging a sledgehammer as an endorsement of occupation and colonial practices. That aside, the presence of the American officials at the bizarre ceremony raised suspicions that the US is helping Israel “Judaize” East Jerusalem.

Secretary General of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Saeb Erekat, called it a “disgrace” to US diplomacy and compared the American delegation to “*extremist fanatic Israeli settlers.*”

Greenblatt and Friedman are doing everything that would bring prosperity to the apartheid colonial settlement.

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry claimed that Friedman and Greenblatt were “*faking history*” for “*colonial purpose.*” The American actions are “*blatant aggression against international law,*” Chief Justice Mahmoud al-Habash said in a separate statement, calling on the international community to preserve the Palestinian heritage of the city.

Meanwhile, Greenblatt hit back at the “*ludicrous*” accusations, claiming on Twitter that archaeology has proven that Jerusalem belongs to the Jewish people: “*We can’t ‘Judaize’ what history/archaeology show.*”

Israel invaded and seized East Jerusalem – which was once under Jordanian custodianship – during the 1967 Six-Day War. The subsequent annexation wasn’t recognized by most countries, with the UN referring to East Jerusalem as an “*Israeli-occupied territory.*”

The status of East Jerusalem has been at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for decades. Recently, the US added more fuel to the frequent flashpoint of violence by moving its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, triggering a wave of massive Palestinian protests in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.