

## Romanian minister says country to move embassy to J'lem, but president denies

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**Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu revealed in a speech to diplomats at the President's Residence in Jerusalem Thursday that more countries were on the way.**



*AN ISRAEL AIR FORCE aerobatic team flies in formation during an aerial show for Independence Day over Jerusalem on April 19th, 2018.. (photo credit: REUTERS)*

Romania will soon move its embassy to Jerusalem, Liviu Dragnea, the president of the Chamber of Deputies and a member of Romania's ruling party, said.

Speaking in an interview with the Romanian TV channel ANTENA 3 on Thursday, Dragnea revealed that the decision was made the previous night.

Prime Minister Viorica Dancila confirmed on Friday that the memorandum has been approved but said its content was confidential and could not be made public yet. "A memorandum has been approved at the government meeting," Dancila told reporters. "We will hold talks afterward."

The decision must still pass in the Romanian cabinet, but with the support of the ruling Social Democratic Party, that is not expected to be a problem.

However, under Romanian law, the final say on embassy relocation belongs to centrist President Klaus Iohannis, who said he had not been consulted.

In a statement, Iohannis urged government to show “responsibility and discernment on major foreign policy decisions that have strategic effects including on national security.

“The president would like to remind that there are a series of UN Security Council resolutions... requesting, among other things, that UN member states abstain from setting up diplomatic missions in Jerusalem.”

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“As a result, relocating Romania’s embassy would constitute breaking the relevant international law,” Iohannis said.

The Romanian Foreign Ministry said the memorandum was only the start of a broad consultation process and that it sought to identify the best way for Bucharest to position itself. It added that Romania’s position regarding the Israeli-Palestinian case “has traditionally been a balanced one, including... bilaterally recognizing the Palestinian state.”

Romania would become the fourth country to move its embassy to Jerusalem, following the United States, Guatemala and Honduras, and the first in Europe.

Israeli strategist Moshe Klughaft worked with the Social Democratic Party in the last election in Romania and helped it emerge victorious. Klughaft took the party’s leaders to Israel, where they learned about the diplomatic situation.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu revealed in a speech to diplomats at the President’s Residence in Jerusalem on Thursday that more countries were on the way. He said preferential treatment would be given to the first 10 countries that move their embassies.

“One way to advance peace is to move your embassies here,” Netanyahu told the diplomats. “President Trump’s decision to move his embassy here says simply that peace must be based on truth. Recognizing reality is the path to build peace.”

Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely flew to Romania on April 10 in what her office described as the first leg of a campaign to persuade countries to move their embassies to Jerusalem.

Hotovely met in Bucharest with Romania's prime minister and foreign minister, as well as with the heads of both houses of the parliament, including Dragnea.

She welcomed Dragnea's announcement on Thursday night and said it was clear from her meetings in Romania that the move was on the way.

*Juliane Helmhold and Reuters contributed to this report.*

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