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Netanyahu Speech Pleases Congress, Virtually No One Else

By Jason Ditz

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu today delivered a major policy speech to the US Congress. It is about the easiest audience in the world for an Israeli official, and virtually each statement of policy or slogan he barked from the podium was met [with a standing ovation by the assembled Congressmen](#).



But of course the Israeli government isn't trying to make peace with the US Congress – and the indications are that they won't get far with the Palestinians on the basis of this speech. Netanyahu's speech was met with uniform condemnation from Israel's left and right and top Palestinian officials.

Israeli [opposition MPs referred](#) to it as an “election commercial,” while the settlers who back the right-far-right coalition government condemned the suggestion that Israel might even end the occupation of even a fraction of the nation's 1967 conquests.

Palestinian leadership insisted that the prime minister's comments, despite being couched as part of a march toward peace, actually made even more onerous demands on the Palestinians, and [make the situation even more difficult](#).

A particular issue is the Palestinian unity government, which Netanyahu demanded be split up. Israeli officials have repeatedly insisted they could not negotiate peace with the Palestinians since they were split up. but now insist that united they are unacceptable.

Another key obstacle is Netanyahu's demand that all of Jerusalem, including the occupied East Jerusalem, remain eternally part of Israel. He insisted only Israel allows all religions access to the holy sites in the region. This netted massive applause, but came just a week after Israel severely curbed access to the Muslim holy sites in the city to prevent public protests.