

Canada unveils proposal to resolve conflict over Jerusalem

Plan was funded by Canadian government but initiated by University of Windsor, with former top Canadian and U.S. diplomats, the Montreal Gazette reports.

By Haaretz Service

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Canada has formally unveiled a proposal to resolve the conflict over the future of Jerusalem's Old City, the Montreal Gazette reported on Saturday.

The proposal, which was released after seven years of research and planning, calls for a "special regime" comprising Israeli and Palestinian officials headed by "an effective and empowered third-party" commissioner to oversee a 0.9-square-kilometer district that contains the city's contested Jewish, Muslim and Christian holy sites.

The proposal was funded by the Canadian government but initiated by University of Windsor, with a number of former top Canadian and American diplomats, who helped craft the plan that is outlined in a 144-page report, the Gazette reported.

Governance and security arrangements are detailed in the report, which describes the Old City as "a microcosm" of the wider Israeli-Palestinian conflict, saying that it encompasses "political, demographic, security, economic, social, religious, territorial and environmental elements."

The Gazette goes on to say that the proposal emphasizes the need for an alternative to the geographic division of Jerusalem or exclusive control by either Israel or the Palestinians, or the creation of a separate international authority to oversee the Old City.

The "special regime" concept was first published last year in a Foreign Affairs article co-authored by Michael Bell, Canada's former ambassador to Israel, Egypt and Jordan, and the former U.S. ambassador to Israel and Egypt, Daniel Kurtzer.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is scheduled to visit Canada at the end of the month to discuss the resumption of peace talks.