

A New Trump Deal: Allow Jonathan Pollard to Immigrate to Israel

Ed. note: Earlier this week, I received an email request from Jonathan and Esther Pollard to reprint the following editorial from the Jerusalem Post. It is the sacred duty of every Jew to do whatever he/she can to help facilitate Jonathan's release from the extremely harsh and grossly unjust conditions of his parole. He should never have served a day in prison, let alone 30 difficult years. He was lied to and deceived by the US government from the start and abandoned by Israel for a long time, under US pressure. A hero who risked his career, his health, and his freedom to help the Jewish People and the State of Israel deserves our deep gratitude. We look forward to witness the fulfillment of the dream of the Pollards to make Aliya and live in Israel.

Commuting Pollard's parole would bring Trump a win/win deal. Amid mounting speculation about the possible consequences of moving the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the move of a single American Jew from the US to Israel should arouse no controversy. Now would be an appropriate time for US President Donald Trump to allow Jonathan Pollard to immigrate to Israel.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly asked President Trump just last month to release Pollard from the arbitrary and unduly harsh parole conditions that deny his religious freedom. He apparently made the request after agreeing in May to provide economic goodwill gestures to the Palestinian Authority. The Prime Minister's Office has told Channel 2 News that Netanyahu raises the topic of Pollard's immigration to Israel in every meeting with US government officials as a purely humanitarian request. Pollard's parole terms were upheld on appeal after he served 30 years of a life sentence. They include a curfew that confines him to his Manhattan home from 7:00pm to 7:00am, preventing him from attending his synagogue and require him to submit any computer, including an employer's, for inspection. He must also wear a GPS-monitoring device that forces him, as an observant Jew, to violate the Sabbath.

Pollard, 62, must also remain in the US for another five years, despite his having served a longer sentence for spying for an ally than anyone in US history and how inconceivable it is that he could still disclose obsolete secrets from more than 30 years ago. Pollard, a civilian intelligence analyst with the US Navy, received his life sentence for passing classified information to Israel under accusations of prejudice on the part of then defense secretary Caspar Weinberger. No other American has received such a crushing sentence for spying for an ally.

Commuting Pollard's parole would bring Trump a win/win deal. It would be both a praiseworthy human gesture that would boost relations with US Jews and Israel, but it also would give him another victory over the perceived injustices of his predecessor, Barack Obama.

Obama's treatment of Pollard stands out in cruel contrast to the pardon he gave to former US soldier Chelsea Manning, who leaked more than 700,000 documents to WikiLeaks in 2010 while serving as an intelligence analyst in Iraq. Manning was

sentenced to 35 years in prison, but Obama commuted her sentence in January, just three days before leaving the White House, from 35 years to just over the seven years Manning had already served.

Letting Pollard move to Jerusalem as Israel celebrates 70 years of independence would demonstrate Trump's commitment to Israel while relieving some of the pressure as he evaluates the eventual embassy move.

Releasing Pollard is the kind of deal-making Trump is all about. He would have plenty of backup: former national security adviser Bud McFarlane and former head of Senate Intelligence Dennis DeConcini have submitted affidavits on Pollard's behalf stating that he is not a security threat regarding information that is 30 years old.

Also not to be ignored is the US Justice Department's own double standard toward Pollard, as demonstrated in the case of Ronald Pelton, who was convicted of selling Russia a large quantity of National Security Agency defense and intelligence secrets, including US efforts on tapping Soviet communications, for just \$35,000. Pelton was sentenced to three life terms, but served the same 30 years in prison as Pollard and was released with none of the additional parole conditions Pollard received.

McFarlane recently wrote that the life sentence given Pollard was a result of Weinberger's "unbalanced reasoning" regarding Israel and was a "great injustice". Then head of Senate Intelligence, senator David Durenberger, wrote at the time that he objected to the life sentence given to Pollard and disagreed with Weinberger's "vehemence" toward Pollard. Former assistant secretary of defense Lawrence Korb wrote that Pollard's life sentence was wrong and blamed it on Weinberger's "visceral dislike" of Israel.

Pollard himself was recently reported to have made a plea to the leaders of both the US and Israel: "As much as Trump needs to be held to his promise to move the embassy, it is just as important that the prime minister keep his promise to bring an agent home."