

On my arrival at University, an awkward ritual that awaited all new students was a one-on-one chat with the Head of the College over a cup of tea. It was a kind and welcoming gesture on his part, but discomfort was clearly felt by both parties and the discussion did not flow naturally.

However, since the timing of entrance examinations required all students to take a six month “gap” between school and university, the Professor had a guaranteed conversation starter. “Where did you go during your gap?” he asked. “Jerusalem”, I replied.

“Oh yes” he said, pleased to have a follow-up question. “And what was it like living right on the border?”

Since this meeting took place in 1982, I politely pointed out that Jerusalem had not been “right on the border” for the previous 15 years. The conversation starter was also its finisher.

Seven years later, I was back in Jerusalem, standing underneath a vast portrait of the Queen, waiting in the British Consulate to register the birth of my first son. After some polite English-style queuing, the certificate was granted, stating that the baby had been born in Jerusalem, in the country of...blank. Even today, my son’s UK passport testifies that he is a native of nowhere.

And last month, following Yom Hashoa, the *Guardian* printed a picture from Israel of train passengers standing in silence during the siren, captioned “a train in the Israeli capital, Jerusalem”. Three days later, the paper carried a “correction” and apologised for its “error”, clarifying that “Jerusalem is not the capital of Israel; Tel Aviv is”.

My College Head, perhaps living as a caricature of an absent-minded professor, could be excused for living some years behind the times (although I suspected that he had chosen to blot out any memory of the Six-Day War and its result). But there is no excuse for the confusion of the world’s nations and media regarding the location of Israel’s capital. Capitals are precisely where countries say they are. In the last twenty years alone, Burma, Nigeria, Kazakhstan and South Sudan have announced new locations for their seats of government, and Foreign Offices around the world duly take note; re-print their notepaper and move their embassies.

However, in January 1950, when Israel declared Jerusalem to be its capital (in “kosher”, pre-67, territory), the Foreign Offices decided that they knew better, and sited their ambassadors in Tel Aviv or nearby. Today only the embassy of Paraguay in Mevaseret Zion is even close to Jerusalem; diplomats from every other country must journey for an hour or more to government meetings. Thus Israel again “dwells alone”; she is the sole country in the world not allowed to determine its own capital city.

The legal basis for this position is that the 1947 UN Partition Resolution declared Jerusalem (both “East” and “West”) to be an “International City” (ignoring that such an entity had never existed in any place or at any time, and probably for good reason), and therefore Israel could not regard Jerusalem as part of its territory. But since no other vestige of that putative “internationalisation” remains, why does this legal legacy linger?

The common identification of Tel Aviv as Israel's capital is thus more than an absurd clerical inconvenience; it is the manifestation of the non-recognition of *any* part of Jerusalem as belonging to Israel. We have become used to hearing that the Old City, the capital of the Jewish people for 3000 years and our emotional and spiritual heart, is not part of Israel. In 2009 President Obama went further and declared the suburbs of Ramot and Gilo to be "settlements" in occupied territory. Will his next step be a demand to "internationalise" Rehavia or the Central Bus Station?

On Sunday we will mark Yom Yerushalayim, and celebrate 45 years since the miraculous return of the Jewish people to the Old City, the Temple Mount and the Western Wall. We can be proud that these 45 years mark the first time in Jerusalem's history that freedom of religion is guaranteed to all faiths, proud that these years have seen glory return to the city that was for so long a backwater of the Ottoman empire or Jordanian kingdom; proud that under Israeli rule the city has grown and flourished.

Perhaps it is time for the nations of the world to cease their petty and insulting re-location of Israel's capital. Or if that is just too much to ask, could they confirm that at least part of Jerusalem is inside Israel? Please Mr Cameron, could my son have a country of birth?