



The State of the U.S.-Israel Relationship

November 12, 2009

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel spoke this week in Washington to The Jewish Federations of North America General Assembly, addressing key issues in the U.S.-Israel relationship. Their remarks (excerpted below) illuminate the close, cooperative relationship and wide agreement between these leaders, while exposing as a myth the supposedly wide gaps that conservative commentators have suggested exist between them.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaking at the General Assembly of The Jewish Federations of North America on November 9, 2009:

Addressing the Goldstone Commission Report

I thank President Obama for resolutely opposing this twisted U.N. resolution. I applaud the overwhelming vote last week in the American Congress condemning this biased report.

Regarding President Obama's Efforts to Ensure Israel's Security

Last week, I watched a joint exercise of the IDF and some 1400 American soldiers to improve Israel's defense against incoming missiles. I salute these American soldiers, and I thank their President, their Commander in Chief, President Obama, for his commitment to Israel's security.

Regarding Iran

The responsible members of the international community must unite to prevent this grave threat to the peace of the entire world. I support President Obama's continued efforts toward these ends, and I appreciate the firm position taken by the leading European countries.

White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel speaking at the General Assembly of The Jewish Federations of North America on November 10, 2009:

Regarding Iran

A year ago, Iran was united in its nuclear ambitions and the world was divided in its response. Today, thanks to the work of the president, there is strong and growing international consensus against a nuclear-armed Iran. That is the goal of America.

Addressing the U.S.-Israel Relationship

As the president has said many times, as the president said in Cairo, Egypt, the bond between the United States and Israel is unbreakable. It is a bond rooted in shared interests and shared values.

... There are some who suggest that this [negotiations] implies a diminished level of support for Israel, or would come at Israel's expense. That is not the intent, and that is not the case and never will be. The truth is just the opposite. For it is only through dialogue that we can achieve lasting peace that Israel seeks.

Addressing the Responsibilities of Palestinians and the Arab World

Make no mistake, the path towards peace is not one that Israel should be asked to walk alone. That is why the U.S. will remain actively engaged, standing next to Israel as its one true friend as it takes each step towards peace and takes that risk. It's why the Palestinians should come to the table, recognize Israel's right to exist, and reject the incitement to violence against Israeli citizens. It is why the other Arab states in the region must meet their responsibilities to the peace process as well.

... As the president said in Cairo, the Arab-Israeli conflict should no longer be used to distract the Arab nations from other problems. Instead, it must be a cause for action to help Palestinian people develop the institutions that will sustain their state and to recognize Israel's legitimacy.

Regarding the Importance of Pursuing Two States

Now there are some on both sides who are prepared to give up the pursuit of two states. ... But all of us – particularly those who are friends of Israel – must step back and think about the future to which that would lead. For the Israeli people, it means living indefinitely amidst hostile neighbors that fail to recognize its right to exist, threatened by ever more sophisticated weaponry. And for Israel's democracy, it means attempting to preserve a democratic state – a Jewish state – when Jews will soon be a minority west of the Jordan River. Demographics cannot be denied. For Palestinians, it means abandoning the creation of two states while the population increases under the false hope that this measure will eventually overwhelm Israel and lead to its demise. The fact is Israel will not let this happen; the United States will not let this happen; and President Obama will not let this happen.