



## **Summary of Vice President Joe Biden's Israel Trip March 11, 2010**

*Vice President Joe Biden visited Israel this week and met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Shimon Peres and others. Biden reaffirmed the U.S.-Israel relationship, discussed U.S.-led efforts to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran, promoted the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and spoke to the Israeli people about the importance of the U.S.-Israel relationship. When honest differences arose surrounding the issue of housing construction beyond the Green Line, Biden spoke frankly and directly – as only close friends can. The remarks by Biden, Netanyahu, and Peres (excerpted below) illuminate the close cooperation embodied in the relationship between our two countries. The statements confirm that President Barack Obama and his administration understand the challenges that Israel faces and that the Obama administration stands with Israel when it comes to her security.*

### **Vice President Joe Biden speaking in Israel:**

#### *On the U.S.-Israel Relationship*

I am here to remind you, though I hope you will never forget, that America stands with you shoulder-to-shoulder in facing these threats. President Obama and I represent an unbroken chain of American leaders who have understood this critical, strategic relationship. As the President said recently, 'I will never waver from ensuring Israel's security and helping them secure themselves in what is a very hostile region.'

–Speech at Tel Aviv University, March 11, 2010

... [T]he cornerstone of the relationship is our absolute, total, unvarnished commitment to Israel's security. Bibi, you heard me say before, progress occurs in the Middle East when everyone knows there is simply no space between the United States and Israel. There is no space between the United States and Israel when it comes to Israel's security. And for that reason, and many others, addressing Iran's nuclear program has been one of our administration's priorities.

- Press Conference with Netanyahu, March 9, 2010

#### *On Preventing a Nuclear-Armed Iran*

... I can promise the Israeli people that we will confront, as allies, any security challenge [Israel] will face. A nuclear-armed Iran would constitute a threat not only to Israel—it would also constitute a threat to the United States.

–Interview with *Yedioth Ahronoth* upon Biden's arrival, March 8, 2010

We're determined—we're determined to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. And we're working with many countries around the world to convince Tehran to meet its international obligations and cease and desist. Iran must also curb its other destabilizing actions in the region, well beyond their desire to acquire nuclear weapons. And that is their continued support for terrorist groups that threaten Israel, and I might add, our interests as well.

-Press Conference with Netanyahu, March 9, 2010

*On Supporting the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process*

Mr. Prime Minister, the United States will always stand with those who take risks for peace. And you're prepared to do that.

-Press Conference with Netanyahu, March 9, 2010

... [W]e are at a moment of real opportunity. ... [T]he interest of both the Palestinians and the Israeli people are ... actually very much more in line than they are in opposition.

-Press Conference with Peres, March 9, 2010

**Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu:**

*On the U.S.-Israel Relationship*

President Obama has said in Cairo, and he has repeated this many times since, that the bonds between Israel and the United States are unbreakable. And he has shown that in the last year in things that are known to the public and some things that are not known to the public. In pursuing, for example, the joint military exercises for military defense between the Israeli army and the American military; in securing Israel's qualitative military edge; and in many other activities along the world's scene, including the battle against the infamous Goldstone report. I think that the bonds -- exactly as President Obama has said, the bonds are unbreakable. And your visit demonstrates how strong they are.

-Press Conference with Biden, March 9, 2010

*On U.S.-Led Efforts to Prevent a Nuclear-Armed Iran*

I very much appreciate the efforts of President Obama and the American government to lead the international community to place tough sanctions on Iran. The stronger those sanctions are, the more likely it will be that the Iranian regime will have to choose between advancing its nuclear program and advancing the future of its own permanence.

-Press Conference with Biden, March 9, 2010

*On the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process*

I also appreciate the administration's effort to advance peace in the region. ... I look forward to working with President Obama, and with you and your entire administration, to forge a historic peace agreement in which the permanence and legitimacy of the Jewish State of Israel is recognized by our Palestinian neighbors, and in which Israel's security is guaranteed for generations to come.

-Press Conference with Biden, March 9, 2010

**Israeli President Shimon Peres:**

*On U.S.-Led Efforts to Prevent a Nuclear-Armed Iran*

... [T]he United States should lead the Iranian policy.... you are the most serious, the most organized, and the most analytical approach to the Iranians. And we have trust in President Obama.

-Press Conference with Biden, March 9, 2010

**Housing Construction Beyond the Green Line:**

- The Vice President – echoing a bipartisan American disagreement with Israel over construction beyond the Green Line dating back decades – spoke honestly and directly, as only close friends can, when he condemned an unfortunately-timed announcement by Israel's Interior Ministry of new housing units beyond the Green Line.
- Israel's Interior Minister Eli Yishai – who was asked by Prime Minister Netanyahu not to allow any 'surprises' during the Vice President's visit – has apologized to Biden and dubbed the ill-timed announcement 'unpleasant' and 'regrettable.' Moreover, Defense Minister Ehud Barak labeled the action 'damaging' while one of his subordinates in the Defense Ministry echoed Biden's words about the action being detrimental to the newly re-started proximity talks.
- American and Israeli policies on the issue of construction beyond the Green Line have differed for forty years. If anyone thinks that the Vice President's honest words were unprecedented, once again, context is key. For comparison, one only needs to look at the statements made by Republican President George H.W. Bush's emissaries to Israel and the Middle East, and the statements by Republican Presidents George W. Bush and Ronald Reagan regarding this issue, for example.

## **Vice President Joe Biden on construction beyond the Green Line:**

... [S]ome legitimately may have been surprised that such a strong supporter of Israel for the last 37 years and beyond ... can speak out so strongly given the ties that I share as well as my country shares with Israel. But quite frankly, folks, sometimes only a friend can deliver the hardest truth.

- Speech at Tel Aviv University, March 11, 2010

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