



# Israeli Leadership on President Barack Obama: In Their Own Words

*Some conservative and Republican pundits have asserted that the policies of the Obama administration have not been good for Israel. Yet from issue to issue – ranging from Iran to the Goldstone Report to increasing Israel’s “qualitative military edge” – President Barack Obama has worked to strengthen the U.S.-Israel relationship, and Israel’s leaders have noticed. Below, please find some recent reactions from Israel’s leaders – in their own words.*

## **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during his meeting with George Mitchell, U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, on October 30, 2009**

“I think that the proposal that the president made in Geneva to have Iran withdraw its enriched uranium, or a good portion of it, outside Iran is a positive first step in that direction,” he said, “and I support and appreciate the president’s ongoing effort to unite the international community to address the challenge of Iran’s attempts to become a nuclear military power.”

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/31/world/middleeast/31mideast.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=netanyahu%20nuclear&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/31/world/middleeast/31mideast.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=netanyahu%20nuclear&st=cse)

## **Comments by Israel’s Ambassador to the United States Michael Oren before the National Jewish Democratic Council 2009 Washington Conference on October 21, 2009**

“This is a president who has gone to Cairo, has made a speech in which for the first time in history, an American leader introduced the idea of Israel’s legitimacy to the heart of the Arab World. And I think it’s very important. ... Read our lips: we are very grateful for this. We are cognizant of the contributions that the president has made for Israel’s security and legitimacy.”

### *On Iran:*

“That has been our unwavering policy. ...We support President Obama in his outreach to the Iranians.”

“The Obama administration is cooperating with us and communicating with us with incredible clarity on all of these issues with an immense amount of cooperation and understanding. I can report unequivocally on this.”

### *On the Goldstone Commission’s Report:*

“The administration came out with a statement against Goldstone that was from our perspective just perfect – condemned it as a travesty of justice, upheld Israel’s right not just to defend itself, but to investigate itself during its own military operations.”

“We know that the United States and the Obama administration stands foursquare beside us in this fight against the Goldstone Commission.”

### *On Maintaining Israel’s “Qualitative Military Edge (QME)”:*

“We found that our ‘QME’ has been eroded. Several months ago, we came to the Obama administration and said, ‘Listen, we have a problem here.’ And the administration’s reaction was immediate: we are going to address this issue, we are going to make sure that we maintain your ‘QME,’ and now we have opened up an entire dialogue [on this issue].... It was just so warm and immediate, that response.”

“We are developing missile defense systems together with the United States. The very high ranking State Department official who deals with this issue told me the other day our relations are excellent, but excellent is not good enough for us; we want better than excellent. And right now, as we sit here today, there is a joint maneuver

between the United States armed forces and the IDF – ‘Juniper Cobra.’ There are a thousand American servicemen and women today in Israel or off Israel’s coast practicing these systems with us and trying them out. What greater embodiment of the US-Israel strategic relationship.”

*On Turkey’s Withdrawal from Joint Military Exercises with the United States and Israel:*  
“Within 24 hours that Turkey made that announcement, the Obama administration said it wasn’t going to participate in those maneuvers either. It was very, very helpful for us.”

### **Israeli President Shimon Peres in *Israel Today* on October 8, 2009**

According to Israeli President Shimon Peres, the Jewish state is putting its faith in US President Barack Obama to bring peace to their troubled region.

During a meeting on Thursday with US envoy George Mitchell, Peres said Israel has “full faith in Obama’s policies....” (<http://www.israeltoday.co.il/default.aspx?tabid=178&nid=19720>)

### **Netanyahu on CNN on September 23, 2009 (as reported in *Haaretz*)**

“Let me tell you something about President Obama, because I think this should be fully appreciated. He stood before the entire Muslim world. I don’t know if a billion people heard him, but hundreds of millions of people in Muslim countries heard him. And he said: ‘The bond between America and Israel is unshakeable. We are absolutely committed to Israel’s security.’”

“Israel has a terrific friend in America and the American people,” Netanyahu added. “And I want the American people to know that you - they have a terrific friend in Israel. In the Middle East, you don’t have that many friends, but we’re definitely right at the top of the list.”

When asked by Wolf Blitzer of CNN “who is a better friend of Israel,” Bush or Obama, Netanyahu responded:

“I think that President Obama’s commitment to Israel has been expressed very loud, very clearly by him. And I think this reflects the underlying friendship between our two countries. It’s very strong.”  
(<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1116400.html>)

### **Netanyahu in *The Jerusalem Post* on September 23, 2009**

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu expressed satisfaction Wednesday with US President Barack Obama’s speech to the UN General Assembly.

Speaking to Channel 2, the prime minister said that there were very good messages for Israel in the speech.

“I found many things that were very good for us. First of all, he said, ‘Let’s return to peace talks without preconditions,’ and that’s what I’ve been saying for the last six months,” said Netanyahu. “I was happy that just like yesterday [in the tripartite meeting with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas], that was the central message.”

Netanyahu also said that in the General Assembly speech, the US president had “expressed his resolute support for a Jewish state, [for Israel] as the country for the Jewish people.”

“I think that’s the core of the conflict, or more precisely, the core of the solution to the conflict. I was happy to hear this in front of the world, the Arab world and the Palestinian people,” he said.  
(<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1253627550159&pagename=JPArticle%2FShowFull>)

Learn more at [www.njdc.org](http://www.njdc.org)

*Updated: November 2, 2009*