



THE FACTS: OBAMA AND ISRAEL

The U.S. and Israeli governments are committed to fully pursuing peace and security in the region. Both governments are in agreement that negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians should begin as soon as possible and that halting Iran's nuclear program is a top priority.

LEADERS IN THEIR THE OWN WORDS

President Barack Obama

The fact is that President Obama's support for Israel is rock-solid. This President stood before the entire Arab world in Cairo on June 4th said, "America's strong bonds with Israel are well known. This bond is unbreakable."

Obama's words in Cairo were broadcast, in Arabic, throughout the Muslim world. In that same speech, the President also spoke directly to and about the Palestinian people:

"Threatening Israel with destruction -- or repeating vile stereotypes about Jews -- is deeply wrong, and only serves to evoke in the minds of Israelis this most painful of memories while preventing the peace that the people of this region deserve."

"Palestinians must abandon violence. Resistance through violence and killing is wrong and it does not succeed. ...It is a sign neither of courage nor power to shoot rockets at sleeping children, or to blow up old women on a bus. That's not how moral authority is claimed; that's how it is surrendered."

"The Palestinian Authority must develop its capacity to govern, with institutions that serve the needs of its people. ...To play a role in fulfilling Palestinian aspirations, to unify the Palestinian people, Hamas must put an end to violence, recognize past agreements, recognize Israel's right to exist."

(http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09/)

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

On the June 15th edition of "Today Show" Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, "Well I share the President's view to try to start a new beginning here in the Middle East. I called on all the Arab leaders to meet with me. I said I am willing to come to Damascus, or Riyadh and Beirut, and frankly I'd hope they come to Jerusalem. But I'd meet them anywhere at any time. And the same is true for the Palestinian leaders. I said that to the President when I met him in Washington. We have a common vision of peace. We want to see peace between us and our Palestinian neighbors. We want them, just as they expect us to recognize a Palestinian state, they have to recognize a Jewish state."

In Netanyahu's widely-anticipated address on June 14th he said, "I also spoke about this with President Obama, and I fully support the idea of a regional peace that he is leading. I share the President's desire to bring about a new era of reconciliation in our region" (<http://blogs.jta.org/politics/article/2009/06/14/1005880/the-netanyahu-speech-the-english-transcript>)

Vice President Joe Biden

Biden on the June 14th edition of “Meet the Press”:

BIDEN: The unconditional demands we're making on the Palestinians that they have to provide security for Israel. They have to stop this, this, this, this baiting of their populations. They have to stop incitement. We've made it clear to the, to the Arab states, they have to do something more than just talk about normalizing relation with Israel.

GREGORY: Is there moral equivalency in the fight between Israelis and Palestinians, in your view?

BIDEN: No. No, there's not moral equivalency in...

GREGORY: Did the president suggest there was in his speech?

BIDEN: I don't believe the president did suggest that. What the, the president suggested is for the well-being of innocent Palestinians and Israelis, that what you need to do is you need a two-state solution along the lines that all the parties had heretofore agreed to, and we're going to use all of our diplomatic capability to move the parties toward actually implementing what they committed to.

(http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/31343018/ns/meet_the_press_online_at_msnbc/page/3/)

OBAMA IS A TRUE FRIEND OF ISRAEL

Obama has been a strong supporter of Israel and the U.S.-Israel relationship throughout his campaign and presidency.

“America’s strong bonds with Israel are well known. This bond is unbreakable. It is based upon cultural and historical ties.”

- Obama’s speech in Cairo, Egypt, 6/4/09

(http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09/)

“You’re a great leader -- a great leader of the United States, a great leader of the world, a great friend of Israel, and someone who is acutely cognizant of our security concerns. ... I was particularly pleased at your reaffirmation of the special relationship between Israel and the United States. ... I very much appreciate, Mr. President, your firm commitment to ensure that Iran does not develop nuclear military capability, and also your statement that you’re leaving all options on the table.” - Netanyahu, 6/18/09 (http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-President-Obama-and-Israeli-Prime-Minister-Netanyahu-in-press-availability/)

ISRAEL’S PEACE AND SECURITY

Obama has been crystal clear in his support for Israel and his rock-solid commitment to Israel’s security as well.

“[T]here's no doubt that the United States has a special relationship with Israel. ...I think that as a vibrant democracy that shares many of our values, obviously we're deeply sympathetic to Israel. And, I think, I would also say that given past statements surrounding Israel – the notion that they should be driven into the sea, that they should be annihilated, that they should be obliterated – the armed aggression that's been directed toward them in the past – you can understand why not only Israelis would feel concerned, but the United States would feel it was important to back this stalwart ally.” - Obama in interview to NPR, 6/1/09

(<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=104806528>)

“Obviously this reflects the extraordinary relationship, the special relationship between the United States and Israel. It is a stalwart ally of the United States. We have historical ties, emotional ties. As the only true democracy of the Middle East it is a source of admiration and inspiration for the American people. I have said from the outset that

when it comes to my policies towards Israel and the Middle East that Israel's security is paramount, and I repeated that to Prime Minister Netanyahu. It is in U.S. national security interests to assure that Israel's security as an independent Jewish state is maintained." - Obama, 5/18/09
(http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-President-Obama-and-Israeli-Prime-Minister-Netanyahu-in-press-availability/)

SETTLEMENTS

Obama's critics seem to have a very short-term memory and forget that U.S. policy on settlements has essentially not changed from the previous George W. Bush administration.

From the Bush years:

"[T]he administration, from the president on down, continues to insist on a 'total freeze' on settlements, in accordance with the road map, and rejects Israel's insistence on continued expansion of the settlements within the limits of their 'natural growth.'" - *Forward*, 5/16/03 (<http://www.forward.com/articles/8808/>)

"In order to minimize friction over the settlements, officials here said, [Israel's Prime Minister] is expected to present [the President] with an Israeli decision to remove some of the so-called 'illegal outposts' built in the West Bank during the past two years. But the officials expressed fears that this might not be enough to ward off pressure from the president."
- *Forward*, 5/16/03 (<http://www.forward.com/articles/8808/>)

IRAN

The U.S. has a firm commitment to stopping Iranian's nuclear weapons program.

"[T]he rights and responsibilities of nations on nuclear weapons ... has been a source of tension between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran. ... But it is clear to all concerned that when it comes to nuclear weapons, we have reached a decisive point. This is not simply about America's interests. It is about preventing a nuclear arms race in the Middle East that could lead this region and the world down a hugely dangerous path." - Obama's speech in Cairo, Egypt, 6/4/09
(http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09/)

Netanyahu himself said, "I was impressed by [Obama's] commitment to prevent Iran from crossing the nuclear threshold ... I have no doubt that that commitment is genuine and that he will follow through." - *Haaretz*, 12/9/08
(<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1044754.html>)

Obama "expected to know by the end of the year whether Iran was making 'a good-faith effort to resolve differences' in talks aimed at ending its nuclear program, signaling to Israel as well as Iran that his willingness to engage in diplomacy over the issue has its limits." - *Washington Times*, 5/20/09
(<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/may/20/us-israel-forming-working-group-on-iran/>)

Learn more at www.njdc.org

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