

Do Palestinians REALLY Want Peace With Israel?

The following is a transcript of Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's address to congress (excerpts) in the spring of 2011.

In an unstable Middle East, Israel is the one anchor of stability. In a region of shifting alliances, Israel is America's unwavering ally. Israel has always been pro-American. Israel will always be pro-American....

An epic battle is now unfolding in the Middle East, between tyranny and freedom.... shaking the earth from the Khyber Pass to the Straits of Gibraltar.... Now this historic moment holds the promise of a new dawn of freedom and opportunity. Millions of young people are determined to change their future.... They muster courage. They risk their lives. They demand dignity. They desire liberty.

These extraordinary scenes in Tunis and Cairo evoke those of Berlin and Prague in 1989. Yet as we share their hopes, we must also remember that those hopes could be snuffed out as they were in Tehran in 1979.... The brief democratic spring in Iran was cut short by a ferocious and unforgiving tyranny. This same tyranny smothered Lebanon's democratic Cedar Revolution, and inflicted on that long-suffering country the medieval rule of Hezbollah.

Today, the Middle East stands at a fateful crossroads.... This path is not paved by elections alone. It is paved when governments permit protests in town squares, when limits are placed on the powers of rulers, when judges are beholden to laws and not men, and when human rights cannot be crushed by tribal loyalties or mob rule.

Israel has always embraced this path... the Middle East has long rejected it. In a region where women are stoned, gays are hanged, Christians are persecuted, Israel stands out. Courageous Arab protesters are now struggling to secure these very same rights for their peoples, for their societies.... Of the 300 million Arabs, less than one-half of one-percent are truly free, and they're citizens of Israel!

This startling fact reveals a basic truth: Israel is not what is *wrong* about the Middle East. Israel is what is *right* about the Middle East....

We long for the day when Israel will be one of many real democracies in the Middle East.... For I believe that a Middle East that is genuinely democratic will be a Middle East truly at peace. But while we hope and work for the best, we must also recognize that powerful forces oppose this future....

Foremost among these forces is Iran. The tyranny in Tehran brutalizes its own people. It supports attacks against American troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. It subjugates Lebanon and Gaza. It sponsors terror worldwide.... The greatest danger facing humanity could soon be upon us: A militant Islamic regime armed with nuclear weapons....

Now the threat to my country cannot be overstated. Those who dismiss it are sticking their heads in the sand. Less than seven decades after six million Jews were murdered, Iran's leaders deny the Holocaust of the Jewish people, while calling for the annihilation of the Jewish state.

Leaders who spew such venom, should be banned from every respectable forum on the planet. But there is something that makes the outrage even greater: The lack of outrage. In much of the international community, the calls for our destruction are met with utter silence. It is even worse because there are many who rush to condemn Israel for defending itself against Iran's terror proxies.

But not you. Not America. You have acted differently. You've condemned the Iranian regime for its genocidal aims. You've passed tough sanctions against Iran. History will salute you America.

President Obama has said that the United States is determined to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. He successfully led the Security Council to adopt sanctions against Iran. You in Congress passed even tougher sanctions. These words and deeds are vitally important. Yet the Ayatollah regime briefly suspended its nuclear program only once, in 2003, when it feared the possibility of military action. That same year, Muammar Qaddafi gave up his nuclear weapons program, and for the same reason. The more Iran believes that all options are on the table, the less the chance of confrontation. This is why I ask you to continue to send an unequivocal message: America will never permit Iran to develop nuclear weapons!

As for Israel, if history has taught the Jewish people anything, it is that we must take calls for our destruction seriously. We are a nation that rose from the

ashes of the Holocaust. When we say never again, we mean never again. Israel always reserves the right to defend itself.

My friends, while Israel will be ever vigilant in its defense, we will never give up on our quest for peace.... We achieved historic peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan that have held up for decades.... But they're not enough. We must also find a way to forge a lasting peace with the Palestinians. Two years ago, I publicly committed to a solution of two states for two peoples: A Palestinian state alongside the Jewish state....

As the leader of Israel... I recognize that in a genuine peace, we will be required to give up parts of the Jewish homeland. In Judea and Samaria, the Jewish people are not foreign occupiers. We are not the British in India. We are not the Belgians in the Congo. This is the land of our forefathers, the Land of Israel, to which Abraham brought the idea of one God, where David set out to confront Goliath, and where Isaiah saw a vision of eternal peace. No distortion of history can deny the four-thousand-year-old bond, between the Jewish people and the Jewish land.

But there is another truth: The Palestinians share this small land with us. We seek a peace in which they will be neither Israel's subjects nor its citizens. They should enjoy a national life of dignity as a free, viable and independent people in their own state. They should enjoy a prosperous economy, where their creativity and initiative can flourish.... In the last two years, the Palestinians have begun to build a better life for themselves. Prime Minister Fayad has led this effort....

We've helped the Palestinian economy by removing hundreds of barriers and roadblocks to the free flow of goods and people. The results have been nothing short of remarkable. The Palestinian economy is... growing by more than 10% a year. Palestinian cities [now] have shopping malls, movie theaters, restaurants, banks... e-businesses. This is all happening without peace. Imagine what could happen with peace....

If the benefits of peace with the Palestinians are so clear, why has peace eluded us? Because all six Israeli Prime Ministers since the signing of Oslo accords agreed to establish a Palestinian state. Myself included. SO WHY HAS PEACE NOT BEEN ACHIEVED? Because so far, the Palestinians have been unwilling to accept a Palestinian state, *if it meant accepting a Jewish state alongside it.*

You see, our conflict has never been about the establishment of a Palestinian state. It has always been about the existence of the *Jewish* state.... In 1947, the United Nations voted to partition the land into a Jewish state and an Arab state. *The Jews said yes.* THE PALESTINIANS SAID NO. In recent years, the Palestinians twice refused generous offers by Israeli Prime Ministers, to establish a Palestinian state on virtually all the territory won by Israel in the Six Day War. They were simply unwilling to end the conflict. And I regret to say this: *They continue to educate their children to hate.* THEY CONTINUE TO NAME PUBLIC SQUARES AFTER TERRORISTS. And worst of all, they continue to perpetuate the fantasy that Israel will one day be flooded by the descendants of Palestinian refugees.

My friends, this must come to an end.... I stood before my people, and I said... "I will accept a Palestinian state." *It is time for President Abbas to stand before his people and say... "I will accept a Jewish state."*

Those six words will change history. They will make clear to the Palestinians that this conflict must come to an end.... They will convince the people of Israel that they have a true partner for peace. With such a partner, the people of Israel will be prepared to make a far-reaching compromise.... This compromise must reflect the dramatic demographic changes that have occurred since 1967. The vast majority of the 650,000 Israelis who live beyond the 1967 lines, reside in neighborhoods and suburbs of Jerusalem and Greater Tel Aviv.

The status of the settlements will be decided only in negotiations. But we must also be honest.... In any peace agreement that ends the conflict, some settlements will end up beyond Israel's borders. The precise delineation of those borders must be negotiated. We will be very generous on the size of a future Palestinian state. But as President Obama said, the border will be different than the one that existed on June 4, 1967. Israel will not return to the indefensible lines of 1967....

President Obama rightly referred to Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people, just as he referred to the future Palestinian state as the homeland of the Palestinian people. Jews from around the world have a right to immigrate to the Jewish state. Palestinians from around the world should have a right to immigrate, if they so choose, to a Palestinian state. This means that the Palestinian refugee problem will be resolved outside the borders of Israel.

As for Jerusalem, ONLY A DEMOCRATIC ISRAEL HAS PROTECTED FREEDOM OF WORSHIP FOR ALL FAITHS IN THE CITY. Jerusalem must never again be divided.

Jerusalem must remain the united capital of Israel. I know that this is a difficult issue for Palestinians. But I believe with creativity and goodwill a solution can be found.

This is the peace I plan to forge with a Palestinian partner committed to peace. But you know very well that in the Middle East, the only peace that will hold is a peace you can defend.

So peace must be anchored in security. In recent years, Israel withdrew from South Lebanon and Gaza. *But we didn't get peace.* INSTEAD, WE GOT 12,000 ROCKETS FIRED FROM THOSE AREAS on our cities, on our children, by Hezbollah and Hamas. The UN peacekeepers in Lebanon *failed* to prevent the smuggling of this weaponry. The European observers in Gaza evaporated overnight. So if Israel simply walked out of the territories, the flow of weapons into a future Palestinian state would be unchecked. Missiles fired from it could reach virtually every home in Israel in less than a minute.... Imagine that right now we all had less than 60 seconds to find shelter from an incoming rocket.... Would anyone live that way? Well, we aren't going to live that way either.

The truth is that Israel needs unique security arrangements because of its unique size. Israel is one of the smallest countries in the world.... Israel on the 1967 lines would be half the width of the Washington Beltway.... So it is therefore absolutely vital for Israel's security that a Palestinian state be fully demilitarized. And it is vital that Israel maintain a long-term military presence along the Jordan River. Solid security arrangements on the ground are necessary not only to protect the peace; they are necessary to protect Israel in case the peace unravels. For in our unstable region, no one can guarantee that our peace partners today will be there tomorrow.

And when I say tomorrow, I don't mean some distant time in the future. I mean—tomorrow. Peace can be achieved only around the negotiating table. The Palestinian attempt to impose a settlement through the United Nations will not bring peace. It should be forcefully opposed by all those who want to see this conflict end.... Peace cannot be imposed. It must be negotiated. But it can only be negotiated with partners committed to peace.

And Hamas is NOT a partner for peace. Hamas remains committed to Israel's destruction and to terrorism. They have a charter... that... not only calls for the obliteration of Israel, but says "kill the Jews wherever you find them." Hamas' leader condemned the killing of Osama bin Laden and praised him as a holy

warrior.... Israel is prepared to sit down today and negotiate peace with the Palestinian Authority. I believe we can fashion a brilliant future of peace for our children. But Israel will not negotiate with a Palestinian government backed by the Palestinian version of Al Qaeda.

So I say to President Abbas: Tear up your pact with Hamas! Sit down and negotiate! Make peace with the Jewish state! And if you do, I promise you this. Israel will not be the last country to welcome a Palestinian state as a new member of the United Nations. It will be the first to do so....

[So, do the Palestinians really want peace with Israel? OF COURSE NOT!]