

AVIGDOR LIEBERMAN: PALESTINIAN STATEHOOD WOULD SET A DANGEROUS PRECEDENT

[National Post Managing Editor for Comment], Jonathan Kay, sat down with Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman during his recent visit to Toronto. Below is an edited transcript of their conversation:

Kay: If the Palestinians get what they want at the United Nations General Assembly, how will your job change?

Lieberman: I don't think that it will change my job. [But] I think it will change the reality on the ground. Since [Benjamin Netanyahu] established this government, the Palestinian Authority [has] enjoyed...8-9% economic growth in [the West Bank].... We have diminished dramatically the number of roadblocks [in order to] provide access and movement. We created very good relations on the ground.... There is very efficient security co-operation. [But] with this unilateral resolution, I am afraid they will lose all this co-operation....

A [unilateral declaration of independence would be a] very bad precedent for other parts of the world. You have many territorial and political disputes between different countries and entities like Transnistria [in eastern Moldova], Cyprus, South America, Kashmir, etc.... Everybody must think about what will be the future of these disputes if you create this precedent.

Kay: Several months ago, the World Bank and IMF said that the West Bank had the financial tools to create an independent state. Do you agree?

Lieberman: No. You need to fulfill a lot of conditions to create your own national state. First of all, we have a divided Palestinian Authority. You have de facto Hamastan in Gaza Strip and you have Fatah [ruling] in [the West Bank]. They postponed three times their elections. Can you imagine that in Canada you postponed elections after the legal date? [Palestinian Authority President] Mahmoud Abbas has postponed local elections because he knows he will lose to Hamas.

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When we ask Abbas why [Israel] should continue to be under [assault] every week from Gaza Strip—and you must understand that Israel suffered since [its] disengagement [from Gaza in 2005] about 12,000 missiles and shells on southern Israel, on peaceful towns—when we ask him, he says ‘What do you want from me, I’m not responsible. I’m not in power there [in Gaza].’ But now, when he goes to the UN, he says: ‘I’m the representative of all Palestinian people...including Gaza.’

To create a normal state, you must first of all create at least normal conditions that are similar to those of normal countries. You have more than 40% unemployment in Gaza—that’s far from normal.... The biggest problem between us and Palestinians, it’s not territory. It’s GDP per capita. In Israel, it’s more than \$30,000. In the Palestinian Authority, it’s only \$3,000. I say that when the Palestinians achieve at least \$15,000 GDP per capita, we will achieve a comprehensive solution. But it’s still a long way....

Kay: Recep Erdogan, the Prime Minister of Turkey, recently went to Egypt and devoted much of his time to criticizing Israel. Are his sentiments genuine—or is he merely trying to improve his profile in the Arab world?

Lieberman: I can only refer to the facts.... It’s very important [to] read his biography. [He’s] very Islamistic. He was in prison for his illegal Islamistic activity.... [Turkey’s leaders] describe their vision as ‘neo-Ottomanic’.... Their clear and public intention is to be a leader of the Islamic world. For this purpose, any confrontation and friction with Israel [means] they gain only more popularity and support.... Every confrontation with Israel is a win-win situation.... We must take his threats very seriously.

Kay: Were you surprised that Greece was so helpful in defusing the second Gaza flotilla this summer?

Lieberman: No—because we have established good co-operation with many countries...not just the United States and Canada. I think that there is more and more understanding in the Western world that Israel is now on the front line [of a battle involving] not just the Jewish people but all Western civilization....

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There is a popular view that the Israel-Palestinian conflict is at the heart of the Middle East’s problems. But I think that today it is clear that this is a misunderstanding.... I don’t see any links between our relations with the Palestinians, and the uprising in Tunisia or clashes in Bahrain or the violence in Libya or bloodshed in Yemen. When we speak about the problems of the Arab world, the biggest problem is that the middle class doesn’t exist. For a strong democracy, for freedom, you need a middle class.... The main reason for the revolution in Egypt, it’s not Zionism or the Jewish people or the Palestinians, but poverty and misery and unemployment.

Kay: Many conservatives believe Barack Obama has little interest, or regard, for Israel. What do you think of this?

Lieberman: I think this is a huge mistake. We saw [what] Barack Obama [did] during the last crisis around our embassy in Cairo. The White House has clarified their position regarding the Palestinian request for unilateral recognitions—they will use their veto [at the Security Council]. But you know, our friendship with the United States isn’t just based on personal contacts and relations, but it’s mutual values and economic cooperation, people-to-people diplomacy, history, the Jewish community. It’s a very strong relationship.... *(National Post, September 20.)*

ABBAS’ U.N. FANTASY

Ron Prozor

LA Times, September 19, 2011

In Lewis Carroll’s “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland,” the heroine falls down a rabbit hole into a confusing fantasy world. Writing today, Carroll might have placed Alice in the 66th General Assembly of the United Nations, where Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas plans this week to seek U.N. recognition of statehood. If Alice was perplexed by the Mad Hatter or the Queen of Hearts, it would be interesting to see her reaction to a president whose mandate has long expired applying for statehood over territory, part of which he is too afraid to visit. Her confusion would be compounded on discovering that a majority of the

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world’s states were happy to indulge this fantasy.

The Palestinian Authority’s bid is likely to pass in the General Assembly, where voting dynamics effectively ensure that nearly every Palestinian whim is rubber-stamped. The truth is that the head of the Palestinian Authority has absolutely no authority in the Gaza Strip. Abbas has not set foot in Gaza since the Hamas terrorist organization carried out a bloody coup and took control of the area in 2007. It’s like New York City electing a mayor who is unable to travel to Brooklyn.

Every state recognized by the U.N. has the obligation to be willing and able to exert its authority over its own territory. Is Abbas willing and able to control Hamas? Perhaps the citizens of southern Israel, semi-permanent residents of bomb shelters, could offer an informed answer. The continued rain of Hamas rockets, mortar shells and missiles on Israeli homes, hospitals and schools provides a vivid illustration that the Palestinian Authority is both unwilling and unable to uphold this basic requirement.

In supporting this initiative, many in the international community seem willing to sweep issues of Palestinian terrorism, incitement and lack of coherent governance under the carpet. They are only indulging a march of folly. The General Assembly cannot create a Palestinian state—and a unilateral action would be bad for peace, bad for our region and, above all, bad for advancing the Palestinians’ aspirations for genuine statehood....

What would a yes vote by the General Assembly do?

First, it would feed the fantasy that compromises reached in negotiations can be bypassed. John F. Kennedy once described the impossibility of working with those who say “What’s mine is mine and what’s yours is negotiable.” The basic premise of the Palestinians’ U.N. bid is this: Give us everything without negotiation, and then we will negotiate about the rest.

True friends of the Palestinians in the international community should urge them to return immediately to direct talks with Israel. No one but Israelis and Palestinians, on their own, at the table, can face the major

challenges that must be addressed if peace is to be achieved....

Voting for this unilateral gambit is a recipe for instability, the breakdown of cooperation and, potentially, violence. Passing resolutions in the General Assembly requires no concessions, no leadership and no responsibility from the Palestinians. The inevitable talks with Israel will not be as easy. They will entail hard work, frustration and many sleepless nights, but negotiations remain the only way forward....

The pursuit of virtual statehood falls in the same realm of fantasy that Alice discovers in Wonderland, all white rabbits and red herrings. Only in the real world, in a direct dialogue filled with difficult truths and serious compromises, can Israelis and Palestinians forge a viable, secure and long-lasting peace.

(Ron Prosor is Israel’s ambassador to the United Nations.)

THE DEPRAVED UNITED NATIONS

Isi Leibler

Jerusalem Post, September 7, 2011

On September [23], the vast majority of the 192 member countries of the United Nations will probably “recognize” a Palestinian state.

The “recognition” will not be accompanied with caveats about dismantling PA terrorist organizations such as Al-Aksa Martyrs Brigades or ending the incitement to hatred and murder of Jews and Israelis that pervades all levels of Palestinian society. There will be no requirements for demilitarization. Nor will negotiations by the PA to unite with the genocidal Hamas be curtailed. The Palestinians will not be obliged to recognize Israel as a Jewish state and will continue demanding the Arab right of return to it.

Renewal of negotiations with Israel are unlikely because the Palestinians realize that their goals can be more effectively achieved by leveraging international pressure on us to make further unilateral concessions—and dismantle us in stages.

This event will be followed by Durban III, a UN-endorsed hate fest designed to delegitimize and demonize the Jewish state. The principal participant will be Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who recently predicted that the UN recognition of Palestinian statehood would represent the first step toward the inevitable elimination of the Jewish state. Like the preceding meetings in 2001 and 2009, this purportedly “anti-racist conference” will overwhelmingly concentrate on spewing venom against Israel.

The founders of the United Nations, who after the defeat of Nazism endorsed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, could never have visualized that the organization they created would become controlled by dictatorships and tyrannies and transformed into a platform for promoting genocide. This was exemplified by the Libyan representative serving as president of the UN General Assembly in 2009, succeeded in July this year by Qatar with Iran as a vice president; genocidal Iranian president Ahmadinejad repeatedly addressing the General Assembly as an honored guest; North Korea, renowned proliferator of nuclear arms, elected to chair the Conference on Disarmament; and Iran, notorious for stoning women for adultery, appointed to the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

But nothing beats the bizarre UN Human Rights Council, 80 percent of whose members, according to the Freedom House index for 2010, are either “not free” or “partly free” countries. Not surprisingly, scoundrels are appointed to positions of authority. Thus we have Richard Falk, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Palestinian territories, who claimed that the US backed and executed the 9/11 attacks, and recently also posted an anti-Semitic cartoon on his website. The Advisory Committee is chaired by Morocco’s Halima Warzawi, who previously blocked an effort to condemn Saddam Hussein for gassing 30,000 Kurds. It also includes Jean Ziegler from Switzerland, who praises Fidel Castro and Zimbabwe dictator Robert Mugabe and co-founded the “Gaddafi International Prize for Human Rights”—the recipients of which included Holocaust denier Roger Garaudy, Louis Farrakhan and Hugo Chavez....

In this degenerate UN Human Rights Council, a pogrom environment dominates, with 70% of all resolutions directed against Israel. This also applies to the General Assembly, where demonizing, delegitimizing and

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attributing all the woes of the world to the Jewish state is reminiscent of the Middle Ages, when Jews were blamed as the principal source of all the evils confronting mankind....

So how should we respond to the impending vote on Palestinian statehood? We must reconcile ourselves to the fact that we will never achieve justice at the United Nations. The combination of Islamic countries, rogue states and dictatorships guarantees that the most extreme resolutions against Israel will always be overwhelmingly carried. Blaming Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu for this state of affairs because he failed to provide a “plan” is simply primitive political demagoguery. What “plan” beyond making suicidal unilateral concessions could conceivably satisfy the Palestinians? But we should not panic. Despite President Barack Obama’s ongoing policy of engaging and appeasing extremists and Islamic states, the US will almost certainly prevent the UN Security Council from imposing sanctions and boycotts against Israel.

Contrary to Defense Minister Ehud Barak’s recent hysterical remarks, this is not a “diplomatic tsunami,” and...we must bear in mind that the UN General Assembly can make proclamations, but it cannot “create” a state or change the status on the ground. Besides, in the absence of the IDF protecting the weak and corrupt PA, a genocidal Hamastan would displace it—a situation that even most European states would not wish to foist upon the region.

Today most Israelis would endorse a Palestinian state—provided Palestinians faced up to the issues mentioned in the opening paragraph of this column. Until Abbas is willing to recognize the Jewish state and forgo the “right of return,” even Obama will be obliged to exercise the US veto at the Security Council. And if the Palestinians resort to violence—Abbas has called for “Arab Spring-like popular resistance”—we must be prepared to overcome our adversaries as we did in the past.

On the positive side, there are rumblings in the United States Congress reflecting grassroots frustration with the annual \$7.7 billion of American taxpayer funds being provided to the UN, despite the fact that the global body’s original noble objectives have been reversed and it has been transformed into a depraved organization.

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, chairwoman of the powerful Congressional House Foreign Affairs Committee, maintains that the UN no longer has any credibility as a force for peace in the Middle East....

She has concluded that with the Obama administration refusing to leverage US funding to defend US interests, Congress must fill the void. Thus on August 30, with 57 co-sponsors, she introduced the United Nations Transparency, Accountability and Reform Act, which would terminate US contributions to any UN entity upgrading the Palestinian mission. The bill would also require the US to disaffiliate and cease funding the Human Rights Council until it repealed its permanent anti-Israeli resolution. It would freeze contributions to UN activities related to the defamatory Goldstone Report and the Durban hate fest and suspend support for UNWRA until it ceased employing terrorists.

Ros-Lehtinen said she was promoting this resolution “for the sake of our ally Israel and all free democracies, for the sake of peace and security. And for the sake of achieving a UN that upholds its founding principles.” The Senate will probably narrowly block this resolution, and the Obama administration has already bitterly condemned the bill, which it would undoubtedly veto.

But the fact that such a resolution could be submitted by the chairwoman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee signals a growing frustration with the UN, which may sooner rather than later lead to a showdown with this obnoxious organization....

DURBAN & 9/11—TEN YEARS LATER

Irwin Cotler
Jerusalem Post, September 15, 2011

It was said in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 that “the whole world changed.” I don’t know if the world is any different, but it is clear that 9/11 had a transformative impact on our politics and psyche.

But, if 9/11 was a transformative event, the same description applies to

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another event that ended on the eve of 9/11. I am referring to “The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance” in Durban, South Africa [2001], which emerged as the tipping point for a new wave of anti-Semitism masquerading as anti-racism. Yet, the 10th anniversary of this event has gone largely unremarked.

As one of my colleagues put it at the time, if 9/11 was the Kristallnacht of terror, Durban was the Mein Kampf. Those of us who personally witnessed the Durban festival of hate—with its hateful declarations, incantations, pamphlets and marches—have forever been transformed. For us, “Durban” is part of our everyday lexicon as a byword for racism and anti-Semitism, just as 9/11 is a byword for terrorist mass murder....

What happened at Durban was truly Orwellian: A conference purportedly organized to fight racism was turned into a festival of racism against Israel and the Jewish people. A conference intended to commemorate the dismantling of South Africa as an apartheid state resonated with spurious calls for the dismantling of Israel’s as an apartheid state....

The six-point indictment emanating from the Teheran regional conference [in February 2001], which became a dominant blueprint for Durban, has emerged as one of the more scurrilous documents relating to Israel and the Jewish people to appear since World War II.

The first specific indictment of Israel spoke of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza as a “crime against humanity, as a new form of apartheid, as a threat to international peace and security.” While UN Security Council Resolution 1373, adopted in the aftermath of 9/11, would characterize terrorism itself as a threat to international peace and security—which no cause or grievance could ever justify—Teheran and later Durban would characterize terrorist acts against Israel as “resistance” to occupation, and since delegates at Durban saw “resistance” against apartheid states as eminently praiseworthy, Durban served to validate terrorist acts against Israel.

Second, Israel was accused of the “ethnic cleansing” of “Mandatory Arab Palestine” in 1947-48—of being, in effect, an “original sin” in its very creation, though its international birth certificate was sanctioned by the

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UN Partition Resolution of 1947, which recommended the partition of then mandatory Palestine into two States—a Jewish State and an Arab State. The Jewish leadership accepted the Partition Resolution, while the Arab and Palestinian leadership rejected it, and launched, in their words, a “war of extermination” against the embryonic Israeli state.

Third, Israel was cast as being responsible for all the evils in the world, the “poisoner of the international wells,” the contemporary analogue to the medieval anti-Semitic libel. In this regard, the delegates at Teheran and Durban were very much taking their cues from the larger UN itself, where, on the occasion of the Teheran conference, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights condemned Israel—and Israel alone—for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Fourth, the documents emanating from Durban introduced a new perspective on the notion of “holocausts,” intentionally written in the plural and in lower case. A large number of states even sought to minimize or exclude any references to the Holocaust, or to marginalize and ignore anti-Semitism, while holding up Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians as an example of a “real” holocaust. Zionism was characterized not only as “racism,” but as a violent expression of racist supremacy—indeed, as a form of anti-Semitism itself.

As it happens, all of this hateful Durban-speak became a legitimizing instrument for a new wave of anti-Semitism in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, as evidenced by the following examples:

1. The Jews were blamed for 9/11 in a set of new “protocols” reflective of what some see as a new international Jewish conspiracy. For example, in many Arab and Muslim countries, teachers, religious leaders and the media propagated the theory about the 4,000 Jews who supposedly had been tipped off to stay away from work at the World Trade Center....

2. In the anti-terrorism debate that took place at the UN in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Arab states and their supporters opposed any attempt to classify “resistance” as terrorism, thereby appropriating the Durban rhetoric of the delegitimization of Israel, on the one hand, and the legitimization of terrorism as “resistance” against Israel, on the other.

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3. A global campaign against Israeli “apartheid” was launched in the form of post-Durban calls for Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions. In an astonishing but revelatory development at a pro-divestment conference in Michigan, just weeks after Durban, a resolution calling for a two-state solution “if Israel were to transform itself and become a real democracy” was defeated, but a resolution calling for the dismantling of Israel as a racist apartheid state was adopted.

4. The first UN Human Rights Commission meeting in the aftermath of Durban—not unlike the one on the road to Durban—sought to single out Israel for differential and discriminatory treatment, with 40% of all the resolutions passed at the meeting indicting Israel....

5. The convening, in December 2001, of the Contracting Parties to the 1949 Geneva Conventions on international humanitarian law was a particularly egregious discriminatory act. For 52 years, the contracting parties had never met—notwithstanding the genocide in the Balkans, the unspeakable and preventable genocide in Rwanda and the killing fields in Sierra Leone. The first and to date only time that the contracting parties have ever come together to put a country in the docket was in the immediate aftermath of Durban. That country, again, was Israel....

In sum, Durban became the tipping point for the coalescence of a new, virulent, globalizing anti-Jewishness reminiscent of the atmospherics that pervaded Europe in the 1930s. In its “benign” form, it found expression in the singling out of Israel and the Jewish people for selective and discriminatory treatment; in its lethal form, this animus continues to find expression in the state-sanctioned genocidal anti-Semitism of Ahmadinejad’s Iran and its terrorist proxies, Hamas and Hizbullah....

On the tenth anniversary of 9/11—a terrorist atrocity borne out of radicalism and hate—let us not overlook the racism and evil still prevalent today. Anti-Semitism—both old and new—is the canary in evil’s mine shaft. As history has taught us only too well, while it begins with Jews, it does not end with Jews. Combating racism, hate and anti-Semitism is everyone’s responsibility.

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Justice and Attorney General of Canada. He was a member of the Canadian delegation to the Durban Conference.)