

**AT UN, OBAMA (FINALLY) SPEAKS TRUTH, AS NETANYAHU
SCORES & ABBAS STRIKES OUT**
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Isranet Daily Briefing, September 26, 2011
<https://www.isranet.org/daily-briefing/un-obama-finally-speak-s-truth-netanyahu-scores-abbas-strikes-out/>

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu last Friday addressed the United Nations General Assembly in New York, conveying Israel's "hope for peace," while reiterating that peace with the Palestinians can only be forged through direct negotiations between the parties. Netanyahu's appeal followed Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas' remarks, deemed by Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman a "speech of incitement," in which Abbas on multiple occasions invoked the Palestinian "Nakba"—the "tragedy" of Israel's creation in 1948 and the beginning of the "occupation." Abbas confirmed that he would ignore Israel and the US and submit an application for a sovereign Palestinian state directly to the UN Security Council.—*Ed.*

TRANSCRIPT OF BINYAMIN NETANYAHU'S U.N. SPEECH

Weekly Standard, September 23, 2011

Thank you, Mr. President.

Ladies and gentlemen, Israel has extended its hand in peace from the moment it was established 63 years ago. On behalf of Israel and the Jewish people, I extend that hand again today. I extend it to the people of Egypt and Jordan, with renewed friendship for neighbors with whom we have made peace. I extend it to the people of Turkey, with respect and good will. I extend it to the people of Libya and Tunisia, with admiration for those trying to build a democratic future. I extend it to the other peoples of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, with whom we want to forge a new beginning. I extend it to the people of Syria, Lebanon and Iran, with awe at the courage of those fighting brutal repression.

But most especially, I extend my hand to the Palestinian people, with whom we seek a just and lasting peace. (Applause.)

Ladies and gentlemen, in Israel our hope for peace never wanes. Our scientists, doctors, innovators, apply their genius to improve the world of tomorrow. Our artists, our writers, enrich the heritage of humanity. Now, I know that this is not exactly the image of Israel that is often

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portrayed in this hall. After all, it was here in 1975 that the age-old yearning of my people to restore our national life in our ancient biblical homeland—it was then that this was braided—branded, rather—shamefully, as racism. And it was here in 1980, right here, that the historic peace agreement between Israel and Egypt wasn't praised; it was denounced! And it's here year after year that Israel is unjustly singled out for condemnation. It's singled out for condemnation more often than all the nations of the world combined. Twenty-one out of the 27 General Assembly resolutions condemn Israel—the one true democracy in the Middle East.

Well, this is an unfortunate part of the U.N. institution. It's the—the theater of the absurd. It doesn't only cast Israel as the villain; it often casts real villains in leading roles: Gadhafi's Libya chaired the U.N. Commission on Human Rights; Saddam's Iraq headed the U.N. Committee on Disarmament.

You might say: That's the past. Well, here's what's happening now—right now, today. Hezbollah-controlled Lebanon now presides over the U.N. Security Council. This means, in effect, that a terror organization presides over the body entrusted with guaranteeing the world's security.

You couldn't make this thing up.

So here in the U.N., automatic majorities can decide anything. They can decide that the sun...rises in the west.... They can also decide—they have decided that the Western Wall in Jerusalem, Judaism's holiest place, is occupied Palestinian territory.

And yet even here in the General Assembly, the truth can sometimes break through. In 1984 when I was appointed Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, I visited the great rabbi of Lubavich. He said to me—and ladies and gentlemen, I don't want any of you to be offended because from personal experience of serving here, I know there are many honorable men and women, many capable and decent people serving their nations here. But here's what the rebbe said to me. He said to me, you'll be serving in a house of many lies. And then he said, remember that even in the darkest place, the light of a single candle can be seen far and wide.

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Today I hope that the light of truth will shine, if only for a few minutes, in a hall that for too long has been a place of darkness for my country. So as Israel's prime minister, I didn't come here to win applause. I came here to speak the truth. (Cheers, applause.) The truth is—the truth is that Israel wants peace. The truth is that I want peace. The truth is that in the Middle East at all times, but especially during these turbulent days, peace must be anchored in security. The truth is that we cannot achieve peace through U.N. resolutions, but only through direct negotiations between the parties. The truth is that so far the Palestinians have refused to negotiate. The truth is that Israel wants peace with a Palestinian state, but the Palestinians want a state without peace. And the truth is you shouldn't let that happen.... [See "On Topics" below for continued full text of P.M. Netanyahu's UN address—Ed.]

ABBAS STRIKES OUT

Elliott Abrams

National Review, September 26, 2011

The rapturous applause that greeted Mahmoud Abbas, appearing before the U.N. General Assembly in his role as chairman of the PLO, was deceiving. The collection of states that swooned when he mentioned Yasser Arafat's 1974 appearance in the same hall will never give him a state—nor even the foreign-aid money to pay his delegation's hotel bills. His statehood project depends on Israel and the United States, and to a lesser extent on the Europeans (and a bit of Gulf Arab financing). His U.N. gambit has annoyed or offended all of those parties....

The Israeli reaction to the Abbas speech is predictably negative, for it was a nasty piece of work filled with harshly worded denunciations—and from which any real commitment to telling truths to the Palestinian people was absent. Instead, Abbas repeatedly referred to the nakba or "catastrophe" of 1948 as the source of the Palestinians' plight, thereby telegraphing to Israelis that his main complaint was the existence of the State of Israel rather than its "1967 borders." His reference to the "Holy Land" as the home of Jesus Christ and the place from which Mohammed ascended to heaven excluded all references to Jews and Jewish history,

and delivered the same awful message. The Abbas speech will end up strengthening Netanyahu's tough approach to Israeli security.

But the most striking evidence of Abbas's error came in the Quartet statement (from the U.S., the U.N., the EU, and Russia) released Friday night, after Abbas and Netanyahu had spoken. In the past two and half years, every Quartet statement has reflected Obama's obsession with construction in the settlements and has demanded a freeze. The statements have also often reflected the Obama administration's tilt toward the Palestinians and against Israel.

But not this one. Instead it reflected both Obama's own U.N. speech, tilting the other way as the American elections appeared over the horizon, and EU annoyance with Abbas. This Quartet statement did not even mention settlements, not once, and instead simply laid out a long timetable for negotiations. The Quartet statement "reiterated its urgent appeal to the parties to overcome the current obstacles and resume direct bilateral Israeli-Palestinian negotiations without delay or preconditions," thereby rejecting the Palestinian demand that a construction freeze come first.

The operational paragraphs were these:

1. Within a month there will be a preparatory meeting between the parties to agree an agenda and method of proceeding in the negotiation.
2. At that meeting there will be a commitment by both sides that the objective of any negotiation is to reach an agreement within a timeframe agreed to by the parties but not longer than the end of 2012. The Quartet expects the parties to come forward with comprehensive proposals within three months on territory and security, and to have made substantial progress within six months.

"The end of 2012" takes them, of course, beyond the U.S. elections. And lest the election-year tilt to Israel was still unclear, the State Department briefer who explained all this to the press late on Friday referred twice to Israeli "flexibility." Gone are the days when the Obama administration pugnaciously sought confrontations with Jerusalem—at least until the reelection campaign is over.

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But Palestinians would be mistaken to attribute the entirety of their defeat to American politics; they should note that Abbas did not get the Security Council vote he wanted. For the moment, at least, the Palestinians could not attain the nine votes they needed to win and thus force an American veto. This is another measure of their failure in New York.

It is true that Abbas's U.N. ploy may work for him in terms of his own domestic politics—for a while, anyway. Instead of being the man who lost Gaza, he may briefly be the man who "bravely" took the statehood issue to the U.N. But he did not take the Palestinians one step closer to peace, nor did he speak to them seriously about what peace will require from them. In this he is a faithful follower of his mentor Yasser Arafat. If there is ever to be peace, the Palestinians will someday need a leadership that tells them the truth: Hard work and difficult compromises will be needed, not applause in the General Assembly.

(Elliott Abrams is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.)

OBAMA IS FINALLY DOING THE RIGHT THING ON ISRAEL— FOR NOW, AT LEAST

Martin Peretz

New Republic, September 24, 2011

...The very surprising words in Obama's address to the General Assembly on Wednesday assured Israelis, Jews, Zionists, and literally millions and millions of Christians (along with other religious humanists) whose beliefs ally them with Jewish civilization that America had not actually turned its back on the very nation that was the first in history to define and give content to the idea of peoplehood.

Read these words carefully:

"Let us be honest with ourselves: Israel is surrounded by neighbors that have waged repeated wars against it. Israel's citizens have been killed by rockets fired at their houses and suicide bombs on their buses.

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Israel's children come of age knowing that throughout the region, other children are taught to hate them. Israel, a small country of less than eight million people, looks out at a world where leaders of much larger nations threaten to wipe it off of the map. The Jewish people carry the burden of centuries of exile and persecution, and fresh memories of knowing that six million people were killed simply because of who they are. Those are facts. They cannot be denied.

"The Jewish people have forged a successful state in their historic homeland. Israel deserves recognition. It deserves normal relations with its neighbors. And friends of the Palestinians do them no favors by ignoring this truth, just as friends of Israel must recognize the need to pursue a two-state solution with a secure Israel next to an independent Palestine."

Well, for the first time the president had actually been honest with himself, not totally honest, to be sure, but honest enough, giving him the undeserved benefit of the doubt. Had he spoken like this in any one of the venues where he had previously addressed crowds actually concerned about a peace settlement in the region he would have first of all assured the State of Israel that he understood its history, its security needs, and its very realistic anxieties about the mercurial neighborhood in which it lives. Had Obama done something like this before he would have reassured the lovers of Zion, the many tens of millions in America, and similar numbers elsewhere that all of his talk about statehood for the Palestinians was not just about satisfying their grievances but also calming the deep foreboding of the Jewish commonwealth that practical arrangements will not be made to balance the obvious instability of Arab countries and present Muslim civilization. This would not be easy to achieve.

I don't imagine that the president cottoned lightly to the tactics and strategy of his own U.N. speech. It was not his natural bearing or disposition. But the raw fact is that Mohammed Abbas refused to compromise on his insistence that America be the party that negotiates with Israel over settlements in the West Bank and about the myriad issues surrounding Jerusalem. By his anger and his ongoing reproaches to Netanyahu (and the almost day-in-day-out cuts at the Israeli prime minister) the president seemed to oblige the Palestinians. The

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administration also mounted a campaign among fashionable media to demonize Bibi, a campaign taken up irrationally by nearly the whole salient staff of The New York Times.... What is Netanyahu's sin? He would not permit the Obama administration to negotiate on Israel's behalf. Which self-respecting country would have parlayed with an intermediary, even one so crucial to its own security like America, over such defining matters? That Obama somehow felt that he could force Israel to participate in such an unrealistic gambit shows how innocent he is or how malevolent he was. Indeed, both his innocence and his malevolence were bolstered by his essential sympathies with the Palestinian cause. But I suspect that Obama will not indulge the Arabs in such dangerous fantasies again....

Obama's statement was not, one should point out, the unvarnished, chapter-and-verse recitation of Israel-friendly policy views on substantive issues. He could have noted that only one of the two parties—the Palestinians—has refused to negotiate since last September. He might have specifically underscored the reality of a divided Palestine, in which a sizable part of the state seeking UN recognition is under the control of a terrorist movement committed to Israel's (and the Palestinian Authority's) destruction. He did not take the opportunity to clarify certain aspects of his parameters for peacemaking that he sidestepped in his May remarks, such as the eminently logical principle that Palestinian refugees will return to Palestine, not Israel, or the urgency of an agreement that ends the conflict and terminates all claims once and for all. He could have scolded many in the room, especially Arab states and their all-talk-but-no-action approach to the Palestinian state-building project. And he should have called specifically on rulers and peoples in countries that already have treaties with Israel (i.e., Egypt and Jordan) to strengthen the regional environment for peace by defending their strategic choice for peace, rather than letting it be the preferred pinata for discontent over domestic issues.

Still, those deficiencies only marginally detract from the declaratory power of his speech. Many factors may have motivated the president to make his passionate statement opposing Palestinian UN recognition, but whether it was born of high policy, moral conviction, or crass politics, it will be compared in the annals of America's lonely defense of Israel at

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the United Nations alongside Daniel Patrick Moynihan's castigation of the Zionism-is-Racism resolution during the Ford administration, and John Negroponte's declaration during the George W. Bush administration that the United States would veto any Security Council resolution on the Middle East conflict that failed to condemn terrorism against Israel....

We shall see what we shall see. Will Obama's sudden counter-instinctive respect for Israel's predicament be long-lasting? Will Israel see Obama's shift as both grave and truthful? Will it, can it aim to reinforce that change? How does he deal with his own sensibility and his many anti-Semitic allies so at odds with the millennial journey of Zion to the State of the Jews?

(Martin Peretz is editor-in-chief emeritus of The New Republic.)

ISRAEL OFFERS PEACE—AGAIN

Michael Oren

Wall Street Journal, September 24, 2011

The Palestinian Authority, which has already made a pact with the Hamas terrorist organization, now seeks recognition for a unilaterally declared state at the United Nations. President Barack Obama, though deeply committed to Palestinian statehood, declares his intention to block that scheme, even by exercising an American veto in the Security Council. Congress, for its part, threatens to cut off aid to the Palestinian Authority if it breaches its commitment to direct talks with Israel and pursues unilateralism.

American mediators, meanwhile, lobby other members of the Middle East Quartet—the U.S., the European Union, the U.N., and Russia—in an attempt to forge a new framework for renewing Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. And Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu waits for the Palestinians to rejoin him at the negotiating table.

Sound confusing? Indeed it was for many observers of this past week's dizzying diplomacy in New York. They asked themselves what exactly

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had transpired at the U.N., and why? What had spurred the Palestinians to turn their backs on a sympathetic U.S. president and a strong Israeli statesman capable of leading his skeptical people to peace? How could the Palestinians risk all they had achieved in recent years—a thriving economy, restored law and order, and significant U.S. aid—in a reckless bid to snatch the statehood that they could easily have earned?

Confusing, perhaps, but the answer is simple. The Palestinians came to the U.N. to get a state, but without giving Israel peace in return.

Understanding the Palestinians' decision requires a review not only of this past week's events but of one that occurred nearly 64 years ago at the same U.N. On Nov. 29, 1947, the General Assembly voted to partition British-controlled Palestine into two states, one Arab and one Jewish, that would live side-by-side in peace. The Jews accepted the agreement, but the Palestinians rejected it and joined with five Arab armies in an ultimately thwarted attempt to destroy the Jewish State of Israel.

Forty six years later, in 1993, the Palestinians received another chance to accept the two-state solution. In the Oslo Accords, which the U.S. co-signed, Palestinians and Israelis pledged to resolve all outstanding issues through face-to-face negotiation and to achieve an historic peace. In fact, these discussions produced two Israeli peace proposals, in 2000 and 2008, that met virtually all of the Palestinians' demands for a sovereign state in the areas won by Israel in the 1967 war—in the West Bank, Gaza and even East Jerusalem.

But Palestinian President Yasser Arafat rejected the first offer and Mahmoud Abbas ignored the second, for the very same reason their predecessors spurned the 1947 Partition Plan. Each time, accepting a Palestinian State meant accepting the Jewish State, a concession the Palestinians were unwilling to make.

In between Israeli peace offers, the Palestinians waged a terror war that killed and maimed thousands of Israelis. When Israel uprooted all of its settlements from Gaza in 2005, the Palestinians failed to create a peaceful enclave and instead created a Hamas terrorist stronghold that fired thousands of rockets at Israeli civilians. Yet, in spite of their rejection and trauma, Israelis continued to uphold the vision of two

peaceful adjacent states.

That goal was embraced by Mr. Netanyahu, leader of the Likud Party, in a speech at Bar Ilan University in June 2009. Turning to “our Palestinian neighbors,” he declared, “let’s begin negotiations immediately without preconditions.” But Mr. Abbas refused to negotiate. Nevertheless, Mr. Netanyahu ordered the removal of hundreds of checkpoints in the West Bank, facilitating remarkable economic growth and dramatically increased transport in and out of Gaza. When President Obama asked him to freeze construction in West Bank settlements, Mr. Netanyahu announced an unprecedented 10-month moratorium. But over the course of two and a half years, Mr. Abbas negotiated for a total of six hours, and then refused to discuss Israel’s security needs.

Those needs have grown immensely in the wake of the upheaval in the Arab world, the rise of Iranian proxies, and the deployment of tens of thousands of terrorist rockets on our borders. Though doubtful of the Palestinians’ readiness for genuine peace, Israelis retain the hope of a two-state solution. Mr. Netanyahu championed that hope and even brought it to the U.N. this week. “I am extending my hand, the hand of Israel, in peace,” he told Mr. Abbas—and the world—on Friday. “I hope you will grasp that hand.”

Unfortunately, Mr. Abbas did not come to New York to shake Mr. Netanyahu’s hand but to grab a state which, he wrote earlier this year, “will pave the way for the internationalization of the conflict” and “pursue claims against Israel at the United Nations.”

The U.S. and other principled nations are standing strong, though, and Mr. Netanyahu is ready to negotiate today—if only Mr. Abbas is willing. While the circumstances have changed since 1947 and even 2008, the formula for peace remains unaltered. By accepting the Jewish State, the Palestinians can have their own.

(Michael Oren is Israel’s ambassador to the United States.)