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Prof. Frederick Krantz, Director

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P.O. Box 175 • Station H Montreal • Quebec • H3G 2K7
cijr@isranet.org 514-486-5544 www.isranet.org

SHABBAT SHALOM! HAG PESACH SAMEACH

PASSOVER —FESTIVAL OF FREEDOM, OBAMA LECTURES ISRAEL BUT WON'T LET POLLARD GO!

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Obama Lectured Israelis, Promised and Applauded Arab Palestinians: [Lori Lowenthal Marcus, Jewish Press, Mar. 22nd, 2013](#)—U.S. President Barack Obama gave two speeches on Thursday, March 21, one to Arab Palestinians in a joint press conference with acting head of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah, and the other to Israelis at the Jerusalem Convention Center.

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THE FESTIVAL OF FREEDOM: PASSOVER, 5773 *Baruch Cohen*

*In memory of our beloved Malca z"l
Passover is a story of hope.
Elie Weisel*

Passover is the festival of Freedom! Gathering around the festive *seder* table provides a feeling of warmth and sustaining joy.

The *Haggadah* is the story of a living drama, not the record of a dead event. When we recite it we are performing an act of remembrance, a unique and personal identification in the *here and now!*

Historically, the spirit of Passover represents a glorious symbol of the struggle for human dignity, the eternal quest for freedom and justice.

During centuries of adversity, we Jews, have found renewed strength and hope in the Passover story. Every person, in every generation, must regard herself/himself, as having been personally freed from slavery. We renew from our past the strength and confidence to struggle for our final victory, our final aim: Eretz Israel, the State of Israel.

Around the festive *seder* table the stories we tell recall our long history, and we gain confidence to hold firmly to our conviction that justice and freedom for all women and men will prevail.

The reading of the *Haggadah* reaffirms our self-confidence and reliance on the god of Israel, and His love of justice and concern for Israel and all humanity.

Hag Pesach Sameach!

Happy Passover to the entire House of Israel and to all CIJR supporters and friends.

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THE BUCK STOPS HERE

Editorial

[Jerusalem Post](#), Mar. 20, 2013

Freedom for Jonathan Pollard is a matter of Israeli national consensus. More than 200,000 Israelis signed a petition calling upon President Barack Obama to bring Pollard with him to Israel, but that didn't happen. In the US, 30 national Jewish organizations have issued a pre-Passover appeal to President Obama led by Conference of Presidents leaders Richard Stone and Malcolm Hoenlein, requesting that Obama release Pollard prior to his 10,000th day of imprisonment, on April 8, 2013.

After wishing Obama a successful trip to the Middle East, they respectfully and urgently requested that the president "act on the commutation of his sentence to time served before this milestone is reached. Mr. Pollard, whose health has deteriorated, has expressed remorse and regret repeatedly."

Obama's answer to a question about Pollard in an interview with Channel 2 television last week was troubling and insensitive. He did not seem to be aware of the concern among the Israeli public and US Jewry over the injustice of Pollard's life sentence, nor of the fear that Pollard's failing health threatens to end his life after 28 years in prison.

On the contrary, Obama responded by reducing Pollard's plight to that of a common criminal who just wants to get out of jail early. He implied that Pollard was trying to jump the line without following proper procedure.

The president's response distanced himself from any direct responsibility for Pollard's fate: He suggested that Pollard should avail himself of the procedures offered by the US justice system which may have "the potential to ultimately release him."

Obama stated that his own involvement is limited by law to observing from a distance to ensure that all prisoners are treated equally, including Pollard. The truth of the matter is quite at odds with Obama's take. Pollard's petition for executive clemency landed on the president's desk on October 15, 2010. It was presented after Pollard had been in prison for 25 years and had exhausted all legal remedies and procedures.

Nine supplemental filings have been added to Pollard's petition for clemency over the past two years. Each additional filing contained copies of letters from high-ranking American officials urging Obama to commute Pollard's disproportionate sentence to time served as a matter of justice.

Among those calling for Pollard's release are those who have first-hand knowledge of the case and are familiar with the secret files. They include former CIA director R. James Woolsey, former White House counsel Bernard Nussbaum, former senator and chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee Dennis DeConcini, former US assistant secretary of defense Lawrence J. Korb, and former attorney-general Michael Muckasey. In their opinion, keeping Pollard in prison any longer is intolerable and unjust. Former secretaries of state George Shultz and Henry Kissinger have declared in letters to the president that the people who are best informed about the classified material Pollard passed to Israel favor his release.

Pollard's clemency file contains numerous petitions by American congressmen and senators, public officials, religious leaders, retired judges, law professors and a host of other notable individuals and groups calling for his release as a matter of justice. Bolstering the outpouring of support for Pollard's release, a recently declassified 1987 CIA damage assessment puts the lie to American allegations that have been used for over a quarter of a century to justify Pollard's continued incarceration.

Now in Israel on his first official visit, President Obama owes a formal response to official appeals by President Shimon Peres and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu for Pollard's release. But more important, Pollard is owed a response to his petition for clemency, and not a brush-off. Pollard did as the president suggested. He followed procedure. That procedure, once exhausted, led to the petition that is sitting on the president's desk.

It is not only the president's constitutional right to set Pollard free from his grossly disproportionate life sentence. It is his duty. Pollard is not an ordinary prisoner. He is an Israeli citizen and the victim of a grave injustice that has gone on far too long. Only Obama can set Pollard free and with the same stroke of his pen repair the American system of justice and restore Israel's confidence in our closest ally. Mr. President, the buck stops with you and the time is now.

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OBAMA LECTURED ISRAELIS, PROMISED AND APPLAUDED ARAB PALESTINIANS

Lori Lowenthal Marcus

[Jewish Press](#), March 22nd, 2013

U.S. President Barack Obama gave two speeches on Thursday, March 21, one to Arab Palestinians in a joint press conference with acting head of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah, and the other to Israelis at the Jerusalem Convention Center.

His talks were ostensibly about the state of relations between the different parties, but everyone knew that the animating impulse was to kickstart the "Middle East Peace Process." Everyone who watched the speeches or read the transcripts, are now desperately looking at the tea leaves to see what just happened. The substance of Obama's two speeches, the venues in which they were given, the words chosen, the words avoided, taken all together paint a vivid picture of this president and his beliefs about the region.

One speech he gave in Ramallah, the acknowledged seat of government of the Palestinian Authority, where he gave a joint press conference with Mahmoud Abbas, the acting leader of the PA. The other he gave in Jerusalem, not at the seat of Israel's government, and not directed to Israel's elected leaders.

At the Jerusalem speech the U.S. president spoke directly to the citizenry of Israel, mostly university students – minus those, such as students at a newly credentialed Israeli university located in Ariel – which is situated beyond the "green line" and, apparently, for Obama is beyond the Pale, ironic given the large number of Arabs who are students at that university.

The speeches revealed little that is new: Obama believes there should be two states on the land, one, the Jewish homeland, Israel, and the other, a new one for Arab Palestinians, called Palestine. He criticized Hezbollah and Hamas as terrorist entities, praised what he said was the Palestinian Authority's transparency, institution-building and security services, and lauded Israeli ingenuity. "Only in Israel could you see the Dead Sea Scrolls and the place where the technology on board the Mars Rover originated," Obama told the audience in Jerusalem.

But there were clear indications of what Obama believes, and what he wants to have happen between Israel and the Arab Palestinians. He believes that the Arab Palestinians, like all "oppressed" people, are yearning for freedom which, when granted, will quell their hatred for their oppressors. He certainly sees their plight as akin to that of African Americans before the passage of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, abolishing slavery. And he links the idea of slavery and second status-hood of African Americans with Arab Palestinians.

And those of us in the United States understand that change takes time but it is also possible, because there was a time when my daughters could not expect to have the same opportunities in their own country as somebody else's daughters.

Obama talked about the Jewish people who were slaves in Egypt, and who had suffered pogroms and genocide and their freedom, expressed in Zionism. "The idea that people deserve to be free in a land of their own," Obama said, and that once the Jews achieved that, they should know that "responsibility does not end when you reach the promised land, it only begins." Suggesting, not too subtly, that it is the responsibility of Israelis to enable Arab Palestinians to enjoy their freedom in their own homeland.

Appealing directly to the Israeli people, the U.S. president said

The Palestinian people's right to self-determination and justice must also be recognized. Put yourself in their shoes – look at the world through their eyes. It is not fair that a Palestinian child cannot grow up in a state of her own, and lives with the presence of a foreign army that controls the movements of her parents every single day. It is not just when settler violence goes unpunished. It is not right to prevent Palestinians from farming their lands; to restrict a student's ability to move around the West Bank; or to displace Palestinian families from their home. Neither occupation nor expulsion is the answer. Just as Israelis built a state in their homeland, Palestinians have a right to be a free people in their own land.

In other words, Obama believes virtually every one of the points of the false narrative that have been spun since Arafat was brought back from Tunisia: the Arab Palestinians are the sole native people, Israeli "settlers" commit violence and that violence goes unpunished, Arab Palestinian farmers are prevented from farming "their" land, the movements of Arab Palestinians are restricted for no reason other than Israeli arrogance and greed, Arab Palestinians have been unfairly expelled from their land and they live under a state of Occupation in their own land, and, ultimately and completely, the land belongs, always belonged and must belong to the Arab Palestinians.

When in Ramallah, the U.S. president did not mention any responsibilities for peace owed by his listeners. Instead, he talked about the recent release of U.S. funds "to help the Palestinian Authority bolster its finances." The only discussion of terrorism when speaking in Ramallah was directed at Hamas. As recently as last month, however, a PA terror group claimed responsibility for a rocket attack on Israel from Gaza.

Just as the U.S. president told the Israelis that the Arabs deserve their own state and that it is the responsibility of Israelis to give it to them, he made the same points to the Arab Palestinian audience gathered in Ramallah.

The Palestinian people deserve an end to occupation and the daily indignities that come with it. Palestinians deserve to move and travel freely, and to feel secure in their communities. Like people everywhere, Palestinians deserve a future of hope — that their rights will be respected, that tomorrow will be better than today and that they can give their children a life of dignity and opportunity. Put simply, the Palestinian people deserve a state of their own.

When in Jerusalem, Obama talked about Hizbollah and the Assad regime, and also Iran, as contributing to Israel's security issues, but nothing about the constant terror attempts by those under the responsibility of the Palestinian Authority, including the Al Aksa Martyrs' Brigade, which is responsible for more terrorist attacks than any other Arab Palestinian terrorist group.

Obama proclaimed in Ramallah that the U.S. seeks “an independent, a viable and a contiguous Palestinian state as the homeland of the Palestinian people.” To the Jewish crowd in Jerusalem, he said the same thing except he left out the word “contiguous.” And the U.S. president congratulated the PA on its achievements of which he and the U.S. , “as its single largest donor of assistance” is so proud: increased transparency, efficiency, stronger and more professional security forces, and institution building.

Obama acknowledged that there are disagreements between the two sides – he referred to them as “irritants”: the “Israelis have concerns about rockets flying into their cities at night,” and for the Arab Palestinians it is “the continued settlement activity in the West Bank area.” But, he said,

My argument is even though both sides may have areas of strong disagreement, may be engaging in activities that the other side considers to be a breach of good faith, we have to push through those things to try to get to an agreement — because if we get an agreement then it will be very clear what the nature of that agreement is: there will be a sovereign Palestinian state, a sovereign Jewish state of Israel.

While side-stepping the Arab insistent focus on the problem of settlement building – and this is what gave rise to furious responses in the Arab media – Obama described the core goal in this way: “How do we get sovereignty for the Palestinian people, and how do we assure security for the Israeli people?” He wants a “broad-based agreement that assures the Palestinians that they have a state, and you have a comprehensive approach that ensures Israel the kind of security they need.” Apparently the new buzz words will be “sovereignty” and “security.”

The problem, of course, with Obama's vision is that determining boundaries is a fixed decision – the land doesn't move, there can't be any change, while a promise, a commitment, even a sworn statement guaranteeing peace is permeable and depends on the commitment of millions of people – many of whom have rather poor track records – to honor it.

And just in case anyone hoped to pretend that the PA understands negotiations happen when both sides to a conflict agree to make substantial compromises in order to achieve a mutually satisfactory goal, that delusion was put to rest. When Mahmoud Abbas introduced President Obama to the gathered crowd in Ramallah, he spoke briefly but made clear what his intentions are, have been, and will always be.

Abbas stated that his people have suffered from “the calamities of the Nakba (the re-birth of Israel),” that the land has belonged to the Arab Palestinian people” since ancient times,” Jerusalem “the Lady of the Cities” must be the capital of the “independent state of Palestine,” that peace cannot come so long as there are “walls, settlements, arrests, denial of refugee rights,” and that the Arab Palestinian people fully intend to join forces with Hamas, thereby “ending the division [to] achieve the Palestinian reconciliation.” Okay then.

There was one new hopeful development that the U.S. president hoped to see replicated. When Obama spoke to the audience in Jerusalem, he revealed that he envisions the future state of Palestine to mirror the

current state of Israel in terms of being an open society, committed to education, entrepreneurship, one that is opposed to corruption and is a hub for regional trade:

One of the great ironies of what is happening in the broader region is that so much of what people are yearning for – education and entrepreneurship; the ability to start a business without paying a bribe, to connect to the global economy – those things can be found in Israel.

Obama described a program run by a U.S. company, Cisco, in Jerusalem, where “young Arab engineers and Palestinian engineers” are hired because they are so well qualified, so talented. He went on to share his fantasy – and it is a fantasy – of such a program taking place in “Palestine”:

Well, imagine if you have a strong, independent state that’s peaceful — and all that talent that currently is being untapped that could be creating jobs and businesses and prosperity throughout this area.

Perhaps people have difficulty imagining that because everyone in the Middle East knows it is not going to happen. There will be no Jews working in those programs alongside the “well qualified, so talented” Arab Palestinian engineers in “Palestine,” because no Jew will be allowed in the state that he and so many Westerners are trying so desperately hard to help create.

So “two states for two people” is likely to be replaced with “sovereignty and security,” the West will continue pretending that: the PA is a non-terrorist political group deserving of continuing U.S. aid, the Israeli government is intransigent and unwilling to make concessions, and it is Israel which bears all responsibility for ensuring that a Palestinian state – created in its own image – comes into existence as soon as possible. Nothing new.

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ON TOPIC

Obama in Jerusalem: Elliott Abrams, *Weekly Standard*, Mar 21, 2013—President Obama spoke to the Israeli people today, at the Jerusalem Convention Center. His remarks moved his administration toward the pre-Obama consensus views of the Clinton and Bush administrations, indeed at several points echoing Bush’s 2008 speech to the Knesset. But he presented a view of the chances for peace with the Palestinians that was far rosier than reality permits—or than he may really believe.

The Obama Visit and American Jewry: Isi Liebler, *Israel Hayom*, Mar. 20, 2013—[Obama] is arriving at a time when the political influence of American Jewry, the most affluent and powerful Diaspora community in our history, is in decline. This is starkly exemplified by its failure to influence successive Administrations to commute the sentence of Jonathan Pollard whose unprecedented inhumane treatment is now even raising ugly allegations of discriminatory prejudice.

Bennett: A Nation Cannot Occupy its Own Land: Lahav Harkov, *Jerusalem Post*, Mar. 21, 2013—Reactions from MKs to US President Barack Obama’s [speech](#) in Jerusalem on Thursday ranged from excited support to condemnation. Economy and Trade Minister Naftali Bennett mentioned the rockets fired at Sderot in the morning, saying they were the result of the previous withdrawal from land, as were thousands of victims over the years.

‘Free Pollard’ Hunger-Striker Going Strong: Daniel K. Eisenbud, *Jerusalem Post*, Mar. 22, 2013—Over one week after beginning a one-man hunger strike under Jerusalem’s Bridge of Strings to free Jonathan Pollard, Michael Foa, 52, a member of Likud, remains resilient, and has been joined by another protester who is also foregoing food.

Full Text of Obama's Jerusalem Speech: *Jerusalem Post*, March 21, 2013—Shalom. It is an honor to be here with you in Jerusalem, and I am so grateful for the welcome that I have received from the people of Israel. I bring with me the support of the American people, and the friendship that binds us together.