

250 US Lawmakers Visit Israel in New Campaign to Combat Declining American Support

JERUSALEM – As the war between Israel and Hamas hits the two-year mark, Israeli leaders have quietly launched a more peaceful offensive on the public relations front.

It is based on the adage that “all politics is local.” Israel has breathed new life into that chiefly American political proverb with the launch of its latest venture.

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While touting the strong partnership between President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli officials are now turning their focus toward vital relations at the state level.

50 States, One Israel: Historic Delegation

CBN News was granted an exclusive front-row seat for its new campaign.

The effort, titled “50 States, One Israel,” selected 250 state lawmakers to travel to various sites throughout Israel for a four-day packed itinerary. The delegation included Republicans and Democrats – with a total of about five from each state – to emphasize bipartisan support.

These citizen legislators work in their state capitals, which the Israeli government sees as prime locations for forging new

friendships, while also recognizing a long history of local support.

"The state-level representatives can really make a difference in the ties between Israel and the United States," said Lior Haiat, Deputy Director General of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"Alabama was the first state, the first place in the world, that recognized the state of Israel back in 1943 – 5 years before Israel was created," he explained. "And every state could really change the reality of the Jews, American Jews, {and} trade between their state and Israel."

While their faces aren't as familiar as some of their counterparts serving in Congress in the Washington Beltway, the large group drew attention from the moment they landed in Tel Aviv aboard a chartered flight from New York's John F. Kennedy Airport.

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The trip was completely funded by the Israeli government, with the goal of allowing the lawmakers to get a firsthand glimpse of the sights, sounds, and flavor of the Jewish state.

It included a walking tour of Jerusalem's Old City, with stops at ancient holy sites like the Western Wall. Many took part in the tradition of placing their written prayers into the wall's cracks and crevices. At the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, several knelt to touch what some believe to be Jesus's tomb.

"The Christian faith, our roots are right here in Jerusalem," said Ty Mathews, a Republican serving as an Ohio state representative. "It blows my mind of everything that has happened in history at this location. Right? That our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ walked these streets."

Organizers also arranged several meetings with Israel's top leaders. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the delegation with a speech designed to emphasize what he framed as the shared fight against Hamas, Hezbollah, and Houthi rebels based on common values between Americans and Israelis.

They also met privately with Amir Ohana, Israel's Speaker of the Knesset, who teamed up with a rock band to give the delegation a mini concert on his guitar after they toured the Knesset.

Wherever they went, each of their hosts acknowledged that they made history as the largest delegation of American politicians to visit Israel.

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Deep Impact

For many, what carried the most significance wasn't necessarily the high-level meetings but rather moments of reflection.

The lawmakers remembered Israel's long history of suffering by touring Holocaust exhibits at Yad Vashem. A few were chosen to place a wreath at the museum's eternal flame.

They also met with residents who live near the border with Gaza in communities like Nahal Oz, Be'eri, Kfar Aza, and Nir Oz. All of the kibbutzim experienced tragic loss of life and property during the Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas terror attack.

A few lawmakers were seen wiping away tears as a survivor from Nahal Oz, which sits about half a mile from Gaza, recounted both her own and others' haunting stories. The oral narrative was occasionally punctuated by the sound of explosions and gunfire in the not so far off distance.

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