

How Far Will the Obama Administration Go in Maligning Israel?

Since before Israel's recent election, and most notably after, it feels that Israel in general and Prime Minister Netanyahu in particular have been under a barrage of attacks from the White House and State Department. This has led many to question how it has become that the U.S. seems to be turning its back on its greatest and only democratic ally in the region, and yet at the same time running to cozy up to Iran, the greatest state sponsor of terrorism not just in the region but the world.

A growing tide of Americans have decried the White House for this, with criticism coming from Jewish and Christian religious leaders, as well as civic and political leaders. It's gotten so bad that the Administration has been called out by a group of congressional Democrats. These include:

Senator John McCain commented, "Look, there was a free and fair democratic election. The only nation in the region that will have such a thing. The president should get over it. Get over your temper tantrum, Mr. President."

Christians United for Israel issued the following statement, "CUFI is a bipartisan organization. We have gone out of our way to acknowledge President Obama when he has stood by Israel. But now we must note that President Obama has crossed the line. His disrespect of the Israeli people and the leader they just re-elected by a wide margin are simply unacceptable. The fact that he blasts Israel while embracing and forgiving Iran only adds salt to the wound. ... It seems that President Obama's fantasies regarding the Palestinians are similar to those he believes regarding Iran. But ignoring danger does not

make it go away. President Obama may prefer to belittle Prime Minister Netanyahu for recognizing these realities. But we would all be better off if President Obama looked past Bibi and saw these dangers for himself.”

Rabbi William Gershon, president of the Rabbinical Assembly, said he would like to see “active public expression of the kind of strong U.S. support for Israel which has often been spoken about by the administration. The prime minister has quickly made significant steps to repair the tensions that developed in the heat of Israel’s election. The time is due, if not overdue, for the U.S. administration to do the same.”

Pastor Bruce Rivers Senior Pastor of Mount Moriah First Baptist Church in Dos Palos, California, commented, “As a pastor of the gospel of Jesus Christ I have no choice but to reject the president and his anti-Christian/Jewish bias. I continue to pray he will possess what he professes: Christianity!”

Nathan Diament, of the Orthodox Union, accused the president of “clearly [preferring] ongoing political confrontation over trying to work with a democratically elected Israeli leader on the critical issues facing our two nations.”

AIPAC issued a statement, “Unfortunately, administration spokespersons rebuffed the prime minister’s efforts to improve the understandings between Israel and the US. In contrast to their comments, we urge the administration to further strengthen ties with America’s most reliable and only truly democratic ally in the Middle East.”

Prominent American-born Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Chief Rabbi of Efrat in Israel, spoke personally at an audience in Jerusalem, “The president of the United States is lashing out at Israel just like Haman lashed out at the Jews. I’m not making a political statement, I’m making a Jewish statement. The president of the United States was disrespectful to my prime

minister, to my country, to my future and to the future of the world.”

I don't disagree with any of these and am grieved by Washington's apparent turning away from Israel, and threats to do more. With the looming negotiations to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons going in a way that seems not to be good for Israel, this is all particularly ominous.

However, a statement made by the White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough at the gathering of J Street, a far left-wing group that purports to be pro-Israel and pro-peace, and received with a rousing ovation, is what particularly concerns me. Among the comments McDonough made, “an occupation that has lasted for 50 years must end.”

Fifty-year occupation? I can do the math. Fifty years ago it was 1965. Is this Obama Administration policy, that the “occupation” began *before* the 1967 Six Day War when Israel took control of Sinai, the Golan Heights, Gaza and the “West Bank?”

Those who peddle this idea that the so called “occupation” began before June 1967 use this as code to deny Israel's right to exist at all, within any borders. Not 1947, 1949, 1967 or today. If, according to the Administration, the “occupation” began before 1967, this feeds the odious thought that Israel's existence is illegitimate in and of itself.

There's not been a lot of nuance recently. The barrage has been quite forthright. For the White House chief of staff to slip this into a speech about Israel suggests two possibilities. Was this a huge gaffe about which they need to apologize and clarify, though there's no reason to believe any such apology or clarification any more than they believe or accept the apology and clarifications that Prime Minister Netanyahu made recently?

Alternatively, in a no-holds-barred environment with such

anti-Israel rhetoric coming from Washington, this may just reflect the complete turning away from Israel and subtly playing into the hand of those who deny Israel's right to exist altogether. Coupled with comments made in Cairo in 2009, basing Israel's legitimacy on the Holocaust, as unthinkable as it would be, it's not impossible.

Israel and the U.S. are both democracies where every vote and every voice count. To inquire of the Administration's policy or express your opinion, you can call the White House directly at 202-456-1111.

Let us pray that the U.S. will continue to bless Israel, and merit God's blessing as promised in Genesis 12:3, and certainly not to curse Israel and, as a result, be cursed.

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