

Obama's Visit: What Is the Real Purpose?

When Barack Obama became president of the United States in 2008, his first foreign trip was to Cairo, Egypt where he proclaimed the wonders of Islam and its glorious history and religious tolerance, and related his own close personal heritage with Islam. He was there, he said, to start a new chapter between Islam and America.

But, alas, his olive branch to Islam has not been reciprocated. In fact, since his visit to the Middle East, the Islamic countries of Egypt, Libya and Tunisia have discarded their secular dictators in exchange for Islamic governments and jihadist militias.

According to Israeli pundits, Obama in his 2009 trip to Cairo reflected a worldview that focused on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as the core issue causing the violence and turbulence in the entire Middle East. Obama felt that he needed closure to the Palestinian issue in order to forge a strong anti-Iran Arab coalition. "Israel was perceived as a secondary ally, at best, and a burden at worst."

Furthermore, as part of his display of placation toward the Islamic world—in the belief that addressing this part of the world would be a catalyst for a process of democratization—he turned a cold shoulder to Israel.

So the purpose of this upcoming trip to Israel is seen optimistically by some—a reformed Obama, who this time is making his first foreign trip of his new term to Israel.

"The answer is simple," says Israel's media. "Obama decided to visit Israel to fix what he spoiled during his first term in office, primarily during the first half of his term. He recognizes his rookie mistakes, typical of someone with a

disproportionate sense of self-confidence. Now as a more seasoned statesman, he has come to understand the world and has perhaps adopted a more humble approach.”

Israelis hope that “today he is well aware his policy was an utter failure; that his policy of appeasement radicalized Islamic and Arab fanaticism and its hate for the U.S. and the West. He knows that turning his back on Israel exacerbated Arab and Palestinian extremism.” (*Israel Hayom*, 2013)

Iran Tops the Agenda

Others think Obama is coming to again pressure Israel, but on another front—Iran.

According to Obama’s officials, Iran will be at the top of the list for discussion. Israel’s Army Radio reported that the president was coming to Israel in order to personally tell Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a clear manner not to order an independent Israeli strike on Iran’s nuclear facilities.

According to these officials, the urgency of the trip is because in Netanyahu’s speech to the United Nations in September, he had flagged the spring of 2013 as a significant time in the context of the Iranian nuclear threat.

And the latest news is Netanyahu has intel revealing that with new Iranian centrifuges, Iran is shortening by one-third the time it will take to make enough uranium for nuclear weapons. Besides, the West is now deeply concerned that Iran and North Korea are in cahoots as they develop not only nuclear weapons, but the missiles to fly them anywhere.

There is no doubt that D-Day is nearing. Even this week in our suburb of Tel Aviv, the authorities have twice checked out the sirens that would announce incoming destruction of some kind.

Syria Continues to Crumble

Secondly, Syria is crumbling. While the West focuses on the chemical stockpiles, Israel is no less focused on the regime's abundance of other strategic weapons, including radars, ground-to-ground missiles and rockets, and sophisticated ground-to-air and ground-to-sea rockets.

When Assad falls, the security situation will no doubt deteriorate on Syria's border with Israel. In fact, the most likely post-Assad scenario is the emergence of a fragmented, decentralized and dysfunctional Syria. As this present civil war decimates Syria and the West does nothing, al-Qaida and other jihadists are pouring into the country. Iran and Hezbollah are establishing their own jihadist militias so they can actively keep the pot boiling after Assad's fall. In fact, some Israeli officials fear Syria could turn into another Afghanistan.

The Washington Post reported that Iranian-backed militias are fighting alongside Syrian government forces to keep Assad in power. But officials think Iran's long-term goal is to have reliable operatives throughout Syria in case the country fractures into ethnic and sectarian enclaves.

Most important to Tehran will be to keep control of an airport or seaport so Hezbollah will have a supply route to bring in Iranian weapons to Lebanon.

The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

As far as the Palestinians are concerned, most Israelis have grown skeptical of the possibility of peace. Whenever a poll is taken, a majority of Israelis will answer "yes" to paying a high price for peace with the Palestinians. In the same poll a majority will reply that they do not believe peace is possible. In fact, the Palestinian conflict was barely mentioned by any party platform in the last election. Israelis have just given up hope.

The main sticking points are the same as they have been for

decades:

- No Palestinian leader will recognize the right of a Jewish state to exist.
- Palestinian leaders demand the “eternal right” for five million Muslim “refugees” to “return” to all the areas where the State of Israel now exists.
- Jerusalem will be the capital of a Muslim Palestinian state.
- Israel must return to the 1949 cease-fire lines (euphemistically called the 1967 borders).
- All of the 600,000 Jews in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) including Jerusalem must leave.

None of these demands are acceptable to Israelis. Besides there are constant attempts between the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza to reunite as one government. It is likely that in the next few months there will be Palestinian elections, and Hamas could certainly take over the West Bank by a free election or by force, just as it did in Gaza.

This would mean that Hamas would make the West Bank the next launching pad for rockets into Tel Aviv. Hamas clearly, continually and publically says it will never accept the existence of Israel, and will continue its war against the Jewish state until it is destroyed.

The Past Cannot Be Repeated

Israelis remember what happened when the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) pulled out of Southern Lebanon. Hezbollah took over and became a state within a state, and now has more weapons than most countries do! Its aim is to destroy Israel.

When Israel pulled out of Gaza, it became “Hamastan,” a launching pad to send 8,000 rockets into Israel. Its aim is to destroy Israel.

Israel gave Egypt the Sinai Desert in return for a peace

agreement. It is now a wild and woolly lawless land with jihadists running wild, killing and kidnapping—and looking for more sophisticated ways to terrorize Israel.

Just this week it has been reported in the Iraqi *Azzaman* newspaper that al-Qaida has three training camps in Sinai. The Israeli government has just spent \$270 million building a border fence to keep terrorists from crossing over the Israel-Sinai border. Indeed, what will come of the Israel-Egyptian peace treaty with Muslim Brotherhood leaders at the head of an Egypt in chaos?

Israel has made many serious offers of peace to the Palestinian Authority—to create “two countries for two peoples who live side by side in peace.”

When Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered Arafat a deal he could not refuse, he refused—and started the second intifada, which murdered more than 1,000 Israelis and 64 foreigners.

When Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert offered Mahmoud Abbas an even better deal, including half of Jerusalem, Abbas refused.

So when President Obama, in his 2009 Cairo speech, demanded that Israel stop all settlement building, but asked nothing of the Palestinians, it was his biggest blunder in the Middle East so far. It simply hardened both the Palestinians and the Israelis.

He did not ask the Palestinians to recognize Israel as a Jewish state.

He did not ask Hamas to give up its goal to destroy Israel.

He asked Israel to stop building homes for Jews in Judea and Samaria, period. And yes, Netanyahu did bow to Obama's demand and ordered a building freeze of new buildings for 10 months

in the West Bank—but not in Jerusalem. For Israelis, Jerusalem is Israel's eternal capital.

Nothing came of the freeze, as Mahmoud Abbas said Israel had not done enough to restart peace negotiations.

Why does Israel insist on continuing to build in the West Bank? Because Israel's leadership does not see a peace agreement on the horizon. I'm guessing that 80 percent of Israelis believe that Palestinian leaders do not want a state; they want to destroy Israel.

If American pressure demands negotiations with the Palestinians, Israel will do its best to go through the motions. But the Israeli government is not expecting a breakthrough—fully aware of the Quran's decrees to “destroy the Jew.”

Israel is in survival mode. If the Arabs will not make peace, then the best thing Israel can do is to strengthen her hold in the West Bank, especially in the larger Jewish built-up areas.

It must be noted that there are around 15 percent of Jewish Israelis (according to the number of votes given to leftist parties) who feel that Israel will ultimately be destroyed if it does not make peace, and so they continue to look for ways to coax the Palestinians towards the negotiation table. Their main fear is the isolation the Palestinians have been able to impose on Israel through the United Nations, which is dominated by Muslim countries and their allies.

Israelis yearn for peace, but most have given up and are just trying to get on with their lives.

What does President Barack Obama want from Israel? Israelis await apprehensively. But one thing we know for certain. It is time for all who love Israel to pray that this president will continue to defend and help Israel, a nation that would not exist if it were not for the God of Israel.

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