

What Will Happen If the World Does Not Stop Iran?

✖ Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's strategy is now clear.

After the worst week in relations in 35 years, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu came to Washington Monday and gave a powerful and effective speech at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) gala dinner at the Washington Convention Center, warning the world to stop Iran—or Israel will—and respectfully but directly challenging the Obama administration on Jerusalem and the peace process.

Netanyahu received scores of standing ovations from the 7,800 guests in attendance, the biggest event in the history of AIPAC. More than half of the members of the U.S. House and Senate were there, as were ambassadors from more than 50 countries and many top Israeli officials, including defense minister Ehud Barak and opposition leader Tzipi Livni. The longest and most sustained came when the prime minister firmly resisted the policy of President Obama, who seeks to divide Jerusalem and stop Israel from building “settlements” in East Jerusalem.

“Jerusalem is not a settlement,” said Netanyahu. “It is our capital.”

Netanyahu's strategy in rebuilding relations is now clear. Reduce tensions with the president and executive branch if at all possible, but focus on speaking directly to the American people and strengthening the truly pro-Israel end of Pennsylvania Avenue: Congress.

Most stunning line of the night: To the surprise of many at the dinner, Sen. Chuck Schumer (.) conceded that when it comes to Iran, “Diplomacy has failed.” We all know this to be true,

but it has not yet been said so clearly and publicly by such a high-ranking Democrat and close supporter of President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Will Schumer's analysis be taken up by fellow Democrats? This remains to be seen, but if it is, it could have dramatic implications for Washington's next steps towards Iran. Schumer urged the administration to keep the military option open, but he stressed hitting Iran with crippling economic sanctions immediately. A bill he has co-sponsored to help cut off gas supplies to Iran (Iran imports 45 percent of its gasoline) passed the Senate on Jan. 28, he noted. It is now being reconciled with the House version. It should go to the president for signature soon, and he demanded the president move decisively with "immediate implementation."

The most sobering speech of the night was that of Sen. Lindsey Graham (.), who spoke the truth more clearly and succinctly than anyone else when he noted that this could be the last annual AIPAC conference before Iran gets the bomb. He said that while he hopes war won't be necessary – he also supports crippling economic sanctions against Iran – the U.S. needs to urgently prepare for the possibility of launching massive airstrikes to stop Tehran from building and deploying nuclear weapons.

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The desire of radical Islam to annihilate Israel was the first issue Netanyahu raised, and rightly so. "Iran's rulers say, 'Israel is a one bomb country,'" the prime minister noted. "The head of Hezbollah says, 'If all the Jews gather in Israel, it will save us the trouble of going after them worldwide.'"

Netanyahu called on the world "to act swiftly and decisively" to thwart Iran's nuclear ambitions, but he made it clear that if the world does not stop Iran, Israel reserves the right to

safeguard her people from another Holocaust.

“The greatest threat to any living organism or nation is not to recognize danger in time,” the prime minister said in his speech’s most sobering moment. “Seventy-five years ago, many leaders around the world put their heads in the sand. Untold millions died in the war that followed. Ultimately, two of history’s greatest leaders helped turn the tide. Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Winston Churchill helped save the world. But they were too late to save 6 million of my own people. The future of the Jewish state can never depend on the goodwill of even the greatest of men. Israel must always reserve the right to defend itself.”

What Have the Palestinian Leaders Done for Peace?

That said, given the brouhaha in the past week between the U.S. and Israel, Netanyahu’s central message naturally focused on his country’s deep and substantive commitment to making peace. He noted that his government has repeatedly called on the Palestinians to come to the negotiating table without preconditions, to no effect.

“From Day One, we called on the Palestinian Authority to begin peace negotiations without delay,” he said. “I make that same call today. President Abbas, come and negotiate peace. Leaders who truly want peace should sit down face-to-face.”

Netanyahu pointed out that his government has dismantled several hundred roadblocks and checkpoints in the West Bank to enable the easier flow of people, goods and services, and that this has lead to dramatic economic growth in Judea and Samaria. He noted that his government announced last year “an unprecedented moratorium on new Israeli construction in Judea and Samaria.”

“This is what my government has done for peace,” said Netanyahu. “What has the Palestinian Authority done for peace?”

The answer, according to Netanyahu: The Palestinian Authority has “placed preconditions on peace talks”; they have “waged a relentless international campaign to undermine Israel’s legitimacy”; they have “promoted the notorious Goldstone report that falsely accuses Israel of war crimes”; they have “continued incitement against Israel – a few days ago, a public square near Ramallah was named after a terrorist who murdered 37 Israeli civilians, including 13 children. The Palestinian Authority did nothing to prevent it.”

Why Does Israel Face a ‘Triple Standard’?

The prime minister thanked the United States for six decades of a strong and enduring relationship, based on shared values and common interests. He mentioned specific ways that the U.S. and Israel work together to advance freedom and fight fanaticism. But he also noted that while Israel has its imperfections and welcomes and appreciates sincere and honest criticism from its friends, “Israel should be judged by the same standards applied to all nations, and allegations against Israel must be grounded in fact.”

Going off text, he then asked why Israel faces a “triple standard” in the world. There is, he said, one standard for dictatorships, another for democracies, and a third for Israel.

A case in point, of course, is the U.N.’s pernicious and anti-Semitic Goldstone Commission Report which condemns Israel for committing so-called “war crimes” for defending her innocent civilians from 10,000-plus rocket attacks from Hamas terrorists in Gaza while for years the U.N. did nothing to stop those rocket attacks and barely holds Hamas to account for those attacks.

Outreach to Evangelicals

Finally, it should be noted that several years ago, to their credit, the leadership of AIPAC decided to make a conscious

effort to reach out to pro-Israel evangelical Christian leaders and activists. I am so glad they did. Monday night, there were 130 evangelical leaders present to show unconditional love and unwavering support to the Jewish people and the state of Israel. In the future, I hope more Christian leaders attend and build bridges to AIPAC and the Jewish community.

My wife and I met numerous religious and secular Jews who are profoundly grateful for the support of evangelicals. One Orthodox Jewish woman told my wife and me: "You Christians are the best friends Israel has. You're the only friends we really have."

It remains to be seen whether Prime Minister Netanyahu's "Washington blitz" will avert a coming train wreck between his government and the Obama administration over Iran, Jerusalem, and the peace process. But he is right to speak directly to the American people and to Israel's friends in Congress. Indeed, he and his government should do much more, including a steady stream of major addresses to pro-Israel groups of Jews and Christians throughout the United States.

Joel C. Rosenberg is the New York Times-best-selling author of seven novels and nonfiction books about Israel, including Epicenter and Inside the Revolution. He served as an aide to Benjamin Netanyahu in 2000. This article was originally published at National Review Online.