

The United States and Israel: Still Standing Together

As we look for light amid the darkness of world events, the U.S. Congress might seem a surprising place to find it. Yet the enduring cooperation between the people and governments of the United States and Israel—surely a beacon of promise and hope—survives despite turnovers in Congress and the presidency.

The U.S. Congress votes in favor of Israel's annual security aid, a necessity more urgent now than ever before. The Christian community's mark among members of Congress to promote legislation that will strengthen the relationship is significant and helps increase the safety of both allies. Although Congress may not base its decisions on Genesis 12:3, that "God will bless those who bless Israel," politically active Christians are motivated by Scripture and Congress matches its decision-making about our staunch ally important for our own nation.

The Islamic regime continues marching toward possessing and using nuclear weapons. Its surrogates surround Israel's borders in Lebanon, Gaza and Syria—geographic proximity that brings terror up close. However, when it comes to Israel, terror shatters the peace within Israel's borders. It is up close and personal when a 21-year-old terrorist living in east Jerusalem arrives at Ateret Avraham synagogue on Shabbat and starts shooting. During that four-minute shooting spree last week, the terrorist shot and killed seven Israelis and wounded three others, all on International Holocaust Remembrance Day. When a second terror attack took place the following morning in the City of David, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) added three additional battalions and ramped up the security alert to its highest level. The murders are considered the worst terror outbreak in years.

Meanwhile, government officials from two nations that are responsible for murdering their own populations recently met in Damascus to arrange a meeting between Iran's president, Ebrahim Raisi, and Syria's dictator, Bashar al-Assad. At this meeting, Iran's foreign minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, and Syria's foreign minister, Faisal Mekdad, recapped their "challenges" with Western nations. Mekdad observed that they must "secure their national interests." He named the United States and the "Zionist Regime" (Israel) and their "mercenaries" as threats.

On another front, the head of the UN's nuclear watchdog—the International Atomic Energy Agency—plans to travel back to Iran in his attempt to revive the 2015 Iran deal. Director Rafael Grossi reports that although Iran doesn't have a nuclear weapon yet, it has "amassed enough nuclear material for several nuclear weapons, not one." I believe this latest attempt at a deal with the Islamic regime will fail, since the ayatollahs are fixated on one goal: using nuclear bombs to establish a worldwide caliphate governed under tyrannical Islamic law. The Gulf Arab states, Israel and the United States are their prime targets.

Iran's leaders view United Nations diplomacy as simply another forum for propaganda. The Iran regime's dangers to its own population and the active terror from its surrogates in Lebanon, Gaza and Syria are intensifying.

But here's one kind of message that is bound to get their attention. On Jan. 26, the U.S. Central Command and Israel Defense Forces completed a massive military exercise called Juniper Oak 2023, the biggest joint drill on record. Its size and scope must have sent an unmistakable message to the ayatollahs. As U.S. General Michael "Erik" Kurilla observed on NBC, "It would not surprise me if Iran sees the scale and the nature of these activities and understands what the two of us are capable of doing."

The combined participation included 1,100 Israeli soldiers and 6,400 U.S. soldiers in the drill. The Times of Israel reported that 142 aircraft were involved: F-35, F-15, F-16 and F/A-18 fighter jets; AC-130 Hercules transports; B-52 heavy bombers; and AH-64 Apache helicopters. A U.S. Navy carrier strike group coordinated operations with six Israeli ships and a submarine that carried out maneuvers with the American aircraft carrier.

Israel provides unmatched efforts that help our own U.S. security, as Israel shares intelligence with the U.S. government and military. The advantages of this cooperation spill over into our civilian airline safety methods that were gleaned from Israeli resources. Another benefit is that Israel never asks for American boots on the ground. Their policy is to defend themselves by themselves.

When it comes to Return on Investment (ROI), our relationship with Israel is quite favorable. Such benefits manifest themselves in our economy. Our U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem, the capital, reported in 2021 that bilateral trade resulted in nearly \$50 billion in goods and services annually. Another example worth noting: Israelis themselves invested around \$24 billion in the United States. Compare huge Israeli investments to our Congress's Ten-Year Memorandum of Understanding with Israel. Renewed again in 2018, the memorandum commits \$3.8 billion annually in U.S. funds for Israel's security for the following decade. Seventy-five percent remains in the U.S.—in factories that manufacture some of Israel's advanced weaponry and employ American citizens. We are surely on the winning end.

When it comes to the U.S. Congress, although Rashida Tlaib, Ilhan Omar and several other members of the House of Representatives are anti-Semitic (as evidenced by their comments and votes), both Democrats and Republicans are staunch pro-Israel votes on important legislation and resolutions to continue strengthening the US-Israel relationship.

Last week, on Jan. 25, 2023, a recent bipartisan resolution—House Resolution 7—roundly won approval, passing in a 420-1 vote. Republican House member Thomas Massie (R-KY) cast the only NO vote. The resolution condemned the “violent suppression” of women-led protesters in Iran for the last five months. Congresswoman Claudia Tenney (R-NY) described the protests as the “most significant popular protest” in Iran since the 1979 takeover by the Islamic regime.

 The 24/7 news cycle thrives on bad news. However, focusing on good news, some that I have mentioned above, provides motivation to do what we can, where we can. Prayer is our foundation, and putting feet on our prayers is faith in action. Three hundred and sixty-five times in Scripture, God says, “Fear not.” He assures us in Isaiah 41:10, “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” {eo}

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