



# ***ISRAEL MATTERS!***

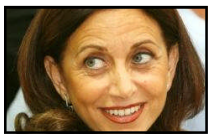
Publication of the Israel Affairs Committee of Temple Beth Shalom

Issue Number 33  
February 2010

## **IDF Military Delegation Cancels UK Trip for Fear of “Lawfare” Arrest**

### **“Boycott Britain,” Suggests Knesset Minister**

Knesset Member Ronit Tirosh has called on Israeli government officials to stop flying British Airways and has suggested an Israeli boycott of British goods.



Her initiative is in retaliation for the British government’s recommendation that its Department for the Environment, Food

and Rural Affairs label Jewish products made in Judea and Samaria as “Israeli settlement produce.” It also suggested that non-Jewish goods be accompanied by the description “Palestinian produce.”

The British department stated that traders would be committing an offense if they declared produce from the area as “produce of Israel.” Foreign Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor noted, “It looks like it is catering to the demands of those whose ultimate goal is the boycott of Israeli products.”

Tirosh called on the Israeli public “to reconsider” buying British merchandise if its government does not cancel its recommendation. Dozens of members of the Knesset signed Tirosh’s petition.

“Lately we have been witness to problematic decisions by the British government that create a climate for anti-Israeli steps, such as an academic boycott. I suggest that Israeli officials stop using British Airways so long as Britain considers Israel to be two different countries.” Tirosh added, “It certainly would not do any harm if we encourage the public to buy “blue and white” [Israeli] goods.”

An Israeli military delegation recently canceled an official visit to Britain, Israeli officials announced. The Israelis called off the trip because their British army hosts could not guarantee they would not be arrested, the officials said. Neither the Israeli military nor the British government would comment.

The action is the latest in a string of politicians and army officials to put off travel to the U.K. because of fears of war crimes prosecution. Israel complained that the practice, spearheaded by pro-Palestinian activists, is harming relations, and Britain’s visiting attorney general said an urgent solution must be found.

The incident underlined the effectiveness of a pro-Palestinian legal campaign to harass Israeli officials in the wake of war crimes allegations after Israel’s devastating invasion of Gaza a year ago to stop rocket attacks.

Israelis brand the tactic “lawfare,” which they denounce as warfare through distortion of laws and conventions. It has crimped the travel plans of many officials and put Israel on the defensive in international bodies.

In Britain, pro-Palestinian groups have forced Israelis to cancel trips for fear of arrest, taking advantage of Britain’s “universal jurisdiction” law that allows prosecution of war criminals whose crimes have no direct connection with Britain. Britain is one of the pioneers of the “universal jurisdiction” concept, but the British government is concerned that its application to Israel is badly straining relations between the two countries and has vowed to solve the problem.

Visiting British Attorney General Patricia Janet Scotland heard a stiff protest from Deputy Israeli Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon, who called the situation “intolerable.” Later, in a speech at Jerusalem’s Hebrew University, Scotland noted that the British government “is looking urgently at ways in which the U.K. system might be changed to avoid this situation arising again and is determined that Israel’s leaders should always be able to travel freely to the U.K.”

In Britain, pro-Palestinian groups have condemned moves to reform the law. “We believe no attempt should be made (to change the law),” said Inayat Bunglawala, spokesman for the Muslim Council of Britain. “There’s no reason why Israel should be singled out for special treatment. If they’re accused of war crimes, we have a duty — and legislation — to prosecute.”

(Continued at pg. 2)

## Israeli Officers Cancel UK Trip

(Cont'd from pg. 1)

Israelis charge the Palestinian use of the universal jurisdiction law is a distortion of its original intention — to prosecute war criminals whose own justice systems were incapable or unwilling to investigate their deeds. Though it has not satisfied international rights groups, Israel's military has investigated its own activities in the Gaza war and says it is still looking into a handful of cases.

Israeli experts charge that other examples of "lawfare" are condemnations by human rights groups and the U.N. of Israeli actions against Palestinian militants, especially last winter's military operation in Gaza that left about 1,400 Palestinians dead, including many civilians, and caused widespread destruction.

During November, pro-Palestinian activists persuaded a London judge to issue an arrest warrant for Israeli politician Tzipi Livni, who was the Israeli Foreign Minister during the war in Gaza. The warrant was withdrawn after Livni canceled her trip, but the matter strained relations between Britain and Israel.

The threat of arrest has forced several former security officials to call off trips to London, including a former general who had to hole up on an airplane at Heathrow Airport in 2005 to avoid arrest. Last fall, Defense Minister Ehud Barak fended off an arrest attempt by successfully arguing he had diplomatic immunity.

Previously, British Foreign Minister David Miliband had phoned Livni and expressed "shock" at the arrest warrant that was issued against her by a British court. Livni reportedly told him in reply that she did not see the matter as personal but as something that concerns the entire state of Israel, and the ability to continue to act against threats that Israel and Britain face together.

Livni said that the problem of British arrest warrants against Israeli officials needs to be solved in the manner which the two countries agreed on when she was Foreign Minister. "The time that goes by without a proper solution is time that is not being utilized well," she said. Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman also held a long talk with Miliband about "bilateral matters" and also touched upon the arrest warrant against Livni.

Miliband told his Israeli counterpart that he finds the matter of the arrest warrant "unacceptable" and so do the other members of Britain's cabinet. He said that solutions need to be found so that such events do not recur. Britain's relationship with Israel is important, he said, and the dialogue between the countries should continue. Lieberman also voiced "disappointment" with Britain's position regarding the Goldstone report, as well as the decision to mark imported products manufactured by Jews in Judea and Samaria, and the British stand regarding the Swedish draft resolution which came up at the European Union conference, regarding the status of Jerusalem.

## Disney to Talk Hebrew on Israeli TV

The Disney Corporation, which began dubbing in Hebrew for its programs on its own channel for children in September, soon will produce original shows in Hebrew and with Israeli actors, the company's Herzliya headquarters said.

Shows such as "The Island," "The Octets" and "The Titans" have received high ratings since they were first aired, according to Globes. They are broadcast on the Disney Channel via cable and satellite, which so far has provided viewers with "Hannah Montana" and "Wizards of Waverly Place" and other productions, all with Hebrew sub-titles.

The announcement is bitter irony for Hamas, which was forced to stop its anti-Israel children's programs, featuring Disney characters, after the company threatened to sue it for copyright infringement. Hamas used characters similar to Mickey Mouse, among others, to air material that often incited Arab children to become martyrs when they grow up.

Anti-Israel groups previously have tried to boycott Disney, which 10 years ago set up its Millennium exhibition in Florida and referred to Jerusalem as "the capital of the millennium" and the "heart of the Israeli people." The Arab League had tried to boycott Disney until Saudi Prince Walid ibn Talal, who was a large shareholder of Euro Disney said, "If we boycott Disney, Israel will win because it will impact our image negatively in the United States."

## Spielberg To Produce Reality Show at Jerusalem Hospital

Steven Spielberg and the producer of "Everybody Loves Raymond" are producing a reality television series set at Jerusalem's Shaare Zedek Hospital.

The Jerusalem Post reported that "Raymond" producer Phil Rosenthal was in Israel recently to check out Shaare Zedek and hold discussions with the Israeli producers of the show, which is scheduled to air on the Sundance Channel in the United States in 2011.

A longtime backer of Shaare Zedek, Rosenthal said the series would revolve around bringing a small group of American doctors to work alongside Israeli doctors, learning about Israel's specialty in emergency treatment and the interplay between Jews, Christians, and Muslims at the hospital.

## Jordan, Palestinian Authority Claim Dead Sea Scrolls

The London-based Globe and Mail reports that Jordan has asked Canada to seize Israel's 2,000-year-old Dead Sea scrolls that are currently on display in Toronto. The scrolls are on display until Sunday at the Royal Ontario Museum. Jordan claims that the scrolls were found in "disputed territory" that Israel captured from Jordanian control in 1967. It asked Canada to hold them until the question of their ownership is settled. Jordan's control of Judea, Samaria, and the Jordan Valley - which it called the "West Bank" - from 1948 until 1967, was recognized internationally by only two countries: Great Britain and Pakistan.

A spokesperson for Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade said that "differences regarding ownership of the Dead Sea scrolls should be addressed by Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority. It would not be appropriate for Canada to intervene as a third party." The Globe and Mail reported that even if Canada ignores the request, "it will make other countries think twice before accepting the controversial exhibit."

Jordan made its recent demand by summoning the Canadian chargé d'affaires in Amman. Citing the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, Jordan claimed that Israel acted illegally after 1967 when it took the scrolls from the Rockefeller Museum in eastern Jerusalem and transferred them to the Israel Museum. The Palestinian Authority made a similar request several months ago.

The Dead Sea scrolls are about 900 documents and Biblical texts, discovered in one of the greatest archaeological finds of the 20th century during the 1940s and 50s in caves in and around Qumran on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. The texts include some of the only known surviving copies of Biblical documents made before 100 B.C.E., and preserve evidence of Jewish life during the Second Temple period.

Israel has never claimed to "own" the scrolls, but is acting simply as their "custodians," an Israel Antiquities Authority spokesperson said, and "as such, we have a right to exhibit them and to conserve them." Israel also argues that short-term, temporary exhibitions of scrolls in another country are not forbidden under the Hague Convention, and that all the scrolls in its possession are part of Jewish heritage.

The Globe and Mail reported that the PA acknowledges that the scrolls are Jewish, but claims that they are "also part of Palestinian heritage just as ancient Roman and Byzantine ruins comprise part of their history."

## Analysts: Israel to Flex Economic Muscle in 2010



Israel, which weathered the global financial disaster better than most countries, will be one of the leaders in economic growth in 2010, investment analysts say.

The value of the shekel is likely to increase and the gross domestic product (GDP) will soar to 3 percent in 2010, compared with near zero this year, the American-based JP Morgan investment house estimated. Its analysts also predicted Israel's growth will jump another 50 percent in 2011, reaching a healthy rate of 4.5 percent, helped by increased consumer purchases and sharp increases in exports and imports.

Merrill Lynch has forecast a shekel-dollar rate as low as 3.40, slightly above the 12-year low of last year, while JP Morgan estimates it will decline only to around 3.55. Few analysts expect it to rise above four shekels to the dollar. During December 2009 it stood just below 3.8.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has praised Israel for its handling last year's financial crisis, which caused chaos in the United States and other countries. The IMF recently said that Israel has been achieving a "safe haven status."

## 'Significant Quantities' of Oil Found in Central Israel

An everlasting hope of finding oil in Israel may have been realized with the recent announcement that "significant quantities" of oil were found in a well in the area of Rosh HaAyin, a city located east of Tel Aviv on the western edge of Samaria.

The Givat Olam (Hebrew for "Hill of the World") Exploration Limited Partnership informed the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange of the discovery, but added, "At this stage it is not possible to estimate the significance of these findings." The company's stock more than doubled on the stock market, according to Globes.

The commercial potential of the oil field will not be known until tests and calculations on production and processing can be completed. The well is one of the few that have been drilled outside of the Negev and Dead Sea area.

Earlier this year, a huge gas field was discovered off the Mediterranean Coast. The gas is expected to be on line in three years and is anticipated to help Israel become self-sufficient in gas. If the Meged well proves commercially viable, it will further Israel's longtime hope of being energy independent and is likely to strengthen the shekel against world currencies.

## Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Writes Historic Op-Ed in Pan-Arab Daily Newspaper

On December 15, 2009, Asharq Alawsat, one of the largest pan-Arab daily newspapers printed an op-ed in Arabic by the Deputy Foreign Minister of the State of Israel, Danny Ayalon. The op-ed was titled "An Open Letter to the Arab World." In an historic and unprecedented article, Ayalon called on the Arab world to accept Israel's extended hand in peace and fraternity by stepping forward and joining with Israel to defeat the forces of extremism and destruction in the Middle East.

Due to the significance of the event, the English translation of Minister Ayalon's editorial is reproduced below in its entirety.

### An Open Letter to the Arab World

By Danny Ayalon

Since the reestablishment of our state, their Arab neighbors. Our Declaration of ment that expressed our hopes and all neighboring states and their peoples ness, and appeal to them to establish These words are as true today as when 61 years later, only two nations, Jordan ples and made peace with the Jewish



Israeli leaders have sought peace with Independence, Israel's founding docu-dreams reads, "We extend our hand to in an offer of peace and good neighborli-bonds of cooperation and mutual help." they were first written in 1948. Sadly, and Egypt, have accepted these princi-State.

Recently the Israeli government has made significant steps to restart negotiations with the Palestinians and reach out to the Arab world. In his Bar-Ilan speech in June, Prime Minister Netanyahu clearly stated his acceptance of a Palestinians state living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel. My government has removed hundreds of roadblocks to improve access and movement for Palestinians and has assisted the facilitation of economic developments in the West Bank, through close cooperation with international parties to expedite projects and remove bottlenecks.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a right-wing government has, in an unprecedented move, declared it would refrain from building new settlements in the West Bank. All of these moves taken together amply demonstrate Israel's willingness for peace.

This Israeli government is also committed to extend a hand to all of our Arab neighbors, its leaders and its citizens, to join together to face some of the major challenges facing us all in the coming years.

For the first time in many years, we find ourselves on the same side in seeking to quell and defeat the forces of extremism and destruction in our region. While many see the threat from Iran directed solely at Israel, we in the region know differently. Together, we understand the menace that emanates from the extremist regime in Tehran. A regime that seeks to export its extremist ideology across the region and beyond, while arming terrorist groups that seek to destabilize moderate Sunni regimes and aiming for hegemonic control of the Middle East and far beyond.

The Iranian regime has many tentacles spread out across the region sowing destruction and despair amongst the people. The enemy of the people of Lebanon is not Israel, but Hizbullah. The enemy of the Palestinian people is not Israel, but Hamas. The enemy of the Egyptian people is not Israel, but militant Islamist opposition groups. All of these groups, and many others, receive their commands from Iran, who wish to control and suppress any aspirations the region has towards freedom and advancement.

Iran seeks to hold an entire region, including its own people, to ransom and keep it engaged in conflicts orchestrated and directed from Tehran. Whether it is in Morocco, Iraq or Yemen, Iran is constantly interfering with Arab sovereignty for their own nefarious gain. Israel and its Sunni neighbors alike are in the sights of Khomeini, Ahmadinejad and their minions.

If Iran is able to attain nuclear weapons, the situation becomes inexplicably and inexorably worse. The Iranian regime has demonstrated that if feels unrestricted in its ability to dominate our region, a nuclear umbrella will only embolden its acolytes to act unrestrained to the detriment of us all. Only together can we face this threat and remove it.

Another issue that entails mutual political will to overcome is the threat of climate change to our region. Many reports and organizations are pinpointing the Middle East as an area that will suffer gravely as rain falls even more infrequently and temperatures rise.

## An Open Letter to the Arab World (Cont'd)

Recently, the leading international scholars on climate change met in Copenhagen and released an important report on this issue. They claimed that climate change will exacerbate conflicts and increase strains and violence among competing groups. We are already witnessing water rights and growing desertification as underlying reasons for the intensification of conflicts in our region.

“Making the desert bloom” has been a core component of the Zionist ethos and successes throughout the decades. Israel has been able to turn desert into arable land and barren landscapes into forests. We constantly share our agricultural miracles with our friends in Africa and Asia and it is for this reason that many countries of the developing world have sought partnership with Israel in addressing their own agricultural challenges.

However, as Israel’s founding fathers wrote in 1948, Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East. Our partners in peace, Jordan and Egypt, and especially the Palestinian Authority, bear witness to our endeavors in this direction. Israel has actively cooperated with Egypt on the “Mubarak Project” for the establishment of an irrigation demonstration system in Nubariya and annually trains hundreds of Jordanians in Israel in fields such as sustainable eco-friendly agricultural methods.

For us to be able to face these and many other challenges, we need to break with the paradigms of the past. The Jewish people are here because of our historical, legal, moral and national rights.

Those naysayers who can not countenance a Jewish political presence in the region will doom all of us to many more decades of conflict and instability. It is time for courageous leaders to emanate from the Arab world as did Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1979 and Jordan’s King Hussein in 1994 and recognize that peaceful coexistence is far better for all of our people than enduring conflict and enmity.

We recognize that the Arab Peace Initiative is an important document, and is welcomed in Israel as a crack in the denial of an Arab recognition of Israel. However, like the Palestinian Authority’s dictates to Israel on the peace process, it remains frozen in 1993.

Since the historic handshake between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat on the White House lawn, Israel has taken major strides both politically and strategically towards the Palestinian position.

Both in 2000 at Camp David and in 2008 during the Annapolis process, Israeli prime ministers offered the Palestinians everything possible for peace and on both occasions the Palestinian leadership rejected these offers. The Palestinian Authority, like the Arab Peace Initiative, is still holding to its maximalist positions and has not moved an inch towards Israel since 1993. These positions are obviously untenable for peace and reflect a worldview that ignores Israel’s significant gestures and seeks to enforce a solution that will mean the end of the Jewish State. Recent Palestinian and Arab League declarations only enforce this view.

It is surely time to look to the future and break with former intransigencies to create a better future for all the people of the region. Israel has gone very far and is prepared to do its part, but we must be met by a willing partner. Without this, the region is doomed to more conflict and will negate the unity of purpose in the Middle East that is necessary to face the mounting challenges from without and within.