



ISRAEL MATTERS!

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Biden Urges Israel to Take Risks for Peace

Clinton: Israel Insulting US

Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, said that Israel's announcement of new settlement construction in disputed territory in East Jerusalem was "insulting" to the United States. Her statement came following Israel's announcement during the high-profile visit of Vice President Joe Biden, who at the time characterized it as embarrassing.

The visit was part of measures taken to set up talks to move the two sides toward a peaceful solution to the ongoing and circular patterns of violence.

"We have to make clear to our Israeli friends and partners that the two-state solution, which we support, which the prime minister himself says he supports, requires confidence-building measures on both sides," Clinton told CNN, adding that the US-Israeli relationship was not at risk.

Commenting on whether Prime Minister Netanyahu knew of the coming announcement during Biden's visit, Clinton said "He (Netanyahu) is the prime minister and is ultimately responsible."

Israeli Interior Minister Eli Yishai apologized for the timing of the announcement. "The approval is a purely technical matter and we have no intention of insulting or seeking a confrontation with the U.S. vice president," said Yishai, adding, "I apologize for the distress this matter caused."



The U.S. will back those willing to "take risks for peace," U.S. Vice President Joe Biden said during the highest-level visit to Israel by an Obama administration official. Biden said he was pleased that Israelis and Palestinians had agreed to resume indirect peace negotiations with U.S. mediation. His two-day visit to Israel seemed clearly aimed at assuaging Israeli concerns that President Obama has been less friendly to Israel than his predecessors, and Biden offered effusive praise.

"Progress occurs in the Middle East when everyone knows there is simply no space between the United States and Israel," he said, a day after the U.S. announced Israelis and Palestinians had agreed to begin indirect peace talks, breaking a 14-month deadlock. The announcement of indirect talks, which will be held through a U.S. mediator, marked the president's first diplomatic breakthrough in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The new peace push is certain to face enormous challenges, including sharp divisions among the Palestinians and a hardline Israeli government seen as unlikely to make wide-ranging concessions.

Biden said he hoped the beginning of indirect talks would be "a vehicle by which we can begin to allay that layer of mistrust that has built up in the last several years." He added, "The United States will always stand with those who take risks for peace."

Polls show that Israelis have come to see Obama as less sympathetic to Israel than previous presidents. Biden's comments appeared aimed at bolstering the administration's standing both among Israelis and their American supporters, whose backing is seen as crucial ahead of next November's congressional elections. The vice president also offered assurances that the U.S. remained committed to Israel's well-being, speaking of the administration's "total, unvarnished commitment to Israel's security."

Iran appeared to loom large in Biden's discussions with Netanyahu, and in the joint appearance with the Israeli leader Biden said: "We are determined to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons." Israel has been pushing for stricter international sanctions targeting Iran's nuclear program, and has refused to rule out a military strike if sanctions fail.

Obama began his term with a push for Mideast peace, prodding Israel to freeze its construction of West Bank settlements on land the Palestinians want for a future state. President Obama's insistence on a total settlement freeze is seen by many in the region to have backfired by encouraging the Palestinians to stake out a position that was politically untenable for Israel's hawkish government.

Motivation Up among IDF Recruits

A record number of new IDF recruits expressed interest in joining a combat unit, Major-General Avi Zamir has revealed. Seventy-six percent of March recruits say they would prefer to be deployed in combat.

In March of 2009, 73 percent of recruits preferred to serve as combat soldiers. Previous statistics have shown that a disproportionately high number of combat soldiers are graduates of yeshiva and from Judea and Samaria.

Zamir, head of IDF Human Resources, described himself as “very satisfied” with the data. The soaring interest in combat positions “represents a peak of all times,” he said. “This is an excellent group of youth, with the desire to contribute in the most significant places,” Zamir concluded.

The draft was scheduled to begin in March with new Golani Brigade recruits. Other units include the Kfir, Givati, Paratroopers, Nahal, and tank divisions.

The basic training program lasts for approximately two months, followed by two more months of advanced training and three to five months of field training and exercises. During training, a limited number of soldiers are selected for elite units and special maneuvers, often highly secretive.

PA Incitement Targets Israeli-Arab Children

Palestinian Authority media outlets have often been used to incite Palestinian Authority Arabs against Israel. Now, a television show called “The Best Home” is inciting Israeli-Arab children against Israel as well. The show’s recent broadcast was picked up and translated by Palestinian Media Watch.

In the latest episode, the host broadcaster addressed Israeli-Arab children living in cities such as Lod, Be’er Sheva and Nazareth. “Dear children, we will always remain in contact with you... and this program is certainly yours too, just as it belongs to every Palestinian child, since you are part of occupied Palestine,” she said.

The hostess avoided using the word “Israel,” choosing instead to say “the occupied territories,” “occupied Palestine,” or “the 1948 territories.” She expressed hope that PA Arabs and Israeli Arabs would be united in the near future, saying, “Soon, if it works out, we will be among you in the 1948 territories, the occupied territories...”

PA officials tell the international community that they are willing to accept the state of Israel within its 1948 borders, if the Palestine Authority is given full control of Judea, Samaria, Gaza, and historic Jerusalem. However, Palestinian Media Watch and similar groups have repeatedly documented the use of official PA media to deny Israel’s right to exist in any form.

PA television shows for children often refer to Israeli built cities such as Ashkelon and Eilat as “Palestinian,” and the official PA map of Palestine includes the entire territory of Israel.

UK to Amend War Crime Arrest Law



Gordon Brown and Tzipi Livni

The British government has decided to amend a law to ensure Israeli officials visiting the UK are not arrested on charges of war crimes. It follows a December 2009 arrest warrant issued for opposition leader Tzipi Livni for her involvement in Operation Cast Lead in Gaza. Israelis brand the tactic “lawfare,” which they denounce as warfare through distortion of laws and conventions.

According to the Daily Telegraph, “the Crown Prosecution Service will take over responsibility for prosecuting war crimes and other violations of international law, ending the current system in which magistrates are obliged to consider a case for an arrest warrant presented

by any individual.”

Writing for the Telegraph, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said he would submit plans to put the CPS in sole charge of “judging the merits of any case brought under international law.” Brown said the right to prosecute international crimes in Britain had been abused by activists. “The only question for me is whether our purpose is best served by a process where an arrest warrant for the gravest crimes can be issued on the slightest of evidence,” he said. “As we have seen, there is now significant danger of such a provision being exploited by politically-motivated organizations or individuals.”

Meanwhile, British Ambassador to Israel Tom Phillips telephoned Livni to inform her of the UK government’s intention to change the law. According to a statement from Livni’s office, the opposition leader thanked Phillips and the British government for the planned move, calling it a step in the right direction. “The British legal system has been abused by cynical elements in the United Kingdom which have done injustice to the whole country,” she said in the statement. “This is important news for every country in the Free World which is fighting terror, and it sends out a vital message that when something correct must be done, the entire political establishment gets on board, even if this means going through the absurd situation of an arrest warrant being issued for me.”