



ISRAEL MATTERS!

Publication of the Israel Affairs Committee of Temple Beth Shalom
1809 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT 06517-1401



Issue Number 53
December 2011

Canadians Rally Around Israel After Palestinian Success at UNESCO

Israel, US Ambassadors Share Vision of Peace

A senior Israeli diplomat and his US counterpart said in a recent joint interview that their greatest desire for the future of the region was to see a peace deal signed between the Jewish state and its neighbors.

Israeli ambassador to the US, Michael Oren and US ambassador to Israel, Dan Shapiro told an audience at the Jewish Federations of North American's General Assembly in Denver that they both hoped to see a US-brokered deal between the Jewish state and Arab countries.

"I have a dream one day that Dan and I will witness the signing of an agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbors on the White House lawn," said Oren. "I share the same vision," Shapiro said.

During the interview two diplomats spoke about growing up in Jewish-American families and their strong ties to Israel. Oren, who was born in the US and made aliyah as an adult, told the American audience that he wept when he had to give up his US citizenship in order to become Israel's ambassador to Washington.

"There was a very nice ceremony at the US embassy in Tel Aviv. I cried, they hugged me," he said.

Throughout the interview the two agreed with one another on their outlook for the Middle East and relations between their two countries. They both dismissed claims that ties between Israel and the US had been rocky since President Barack Obama entered the White House, saying they both countries agreed on the fundamentals. "On big issues like Iran and Israel's security there's never been disagreement," Oren said. [JPost]

Canada joined the United States and Israel in cutting funding to UNESCO. The move comes after the vote by the 194 members of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to accept Palestine as a member. The Canadian government said it was withdrawing the voluntary contribution to the UN body in response to the recent decision to accept Palestine as a member.



Canada, the U.S., and Israel were among the fourteen member nations to vote against the Palestinians being awarded membership. Canada is a staunch ally of Israel with Prime Minister Stephen Harper (photo, left) at one time saying if it came to a point where he had to decide, he would put Israel's interest ahead of

Canada's.

After the United States cut its entire contribution to UNESCO, an estimated \$60 million a year, Israel followed suit by ceasing its contribution of \$2 million a year.

Canada, which almost always sides with the U.S. on Israeli issues, has frozen a portion of its funding to UNESCO, whose stated objectives are "to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through education, science, and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights along with fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the UN Charter."

Ottawa will no longer contribute an estimated \$1.3 million a year in extra funding to the agency and will refuse to accept an increase to its nearly \$10 million in current annual base funding. "We're just deeply concerned with the decision that UNESCO has taken," Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird said.

"The bottom line is there's going to be a large hole in UNESCO's budget because of the American law which withdraws funding, and people at UNESCO should not look to Canada to fill that budget hole," said Minister Baird. "They'll have to go to the countries that supported this resolution that caused this budget loophole. And if they want to appeal to Canada to make even more contributions to voluntary UNESCO initiatives, we will not be looking at entertaining new ones." [India Gazette]

Supreme Court Hears Case of American Born in Jerusalem

The Supreme Court was scheduled to hear arguments in a Jerusalem-born boy's challenge to State Department policy that prevents him from having his passport show he was born in Israel. The Obama administration, like its Republican and Democratic predecessors, says it doesn't want to stir up anger in the Arab world by appearing to take a position on the ultimate fate of Jerusalem. U.S. policy on the status of the city that is important to Jews, Muslims and Christians should be negotiated.

Lawyers for 9-year-old Menachem Zivotofsky were to argue that the foreign policy concerns are trivial. Thirty-nine lawmakers from both parties are siding with the boy and his parents, defending a provision in a 2002 law that allows Israel to be listed as the birthplace for Americans born in Jerusalem.

President George W. Bush signed the much larger law, but said the provision on Jerusalem interfered with his power over foreign affairs, including the authority to recognize foreign states. Bush issued a statement at the time of the signing in which he said that "U.S. policy regarding Jerusalem has not changed."

Israel has proclaimed the once-divided city as its capital; the U.S. and most nations do not recognize Jerusalem as the capital. Had Menachem been born in Tel Aviv, the State Department would have issued a passport listing his place of birth as Israel. The regular practice for recording the birth of a U.S. citizen abroad is to list the country where it occurred. But the department's guide tells consular officials, "For a person born in Jerusalem, write Jerusalem as the place of birth in the passport."

In late 2002, Naomi Zivotofsky, Menachem's mother, went to the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv to get her baby a U.S. passport, one that listed Israel as his birthplace. After State Department officials refused her request, the family sued. The Zivotofskys and their supporters point out that other federal agencies, including the Defense and Justice Departments, refer in official documents to "Jerusalem, Israel." The legal briefs also note that the hospital where Menachem was born is in west Jerusalem, over which there is no dispute about Israeli sovereignty, except by parties that oppose the nation's existence at all.

Federal courts have so far said they have no authority to consider the matter, which they have labeled a political dispute that is best resolved by the other two branches of government without court involvement. The Supreme Court has asked for argument on that issue, as well as on the substance of the family's plea that the law regarding passports be enforced. [AP]



Israel Ranked 22nd in Report on Global Competitiveness

According to the Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) for 2011-2012 published by the World Economic Forum's Centre for Global Competitiveness and Performance, Israel's main strengths remain its "world-class" capacity for innovation, derived from the presence of "the world's best research institutions" and their collaborations with

the business sector, and the high number of patents.

The report mentions Israel's favorable financial environment, particularly the solid availability of venture capital, which has "further contributed to making Israel an innovation powerhouse." According to the report, these elements have become stronger in the past year. The report notes that

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Country/Economy	GCI 2011-2012		GCI 2010-2011	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Change
Switzerland	1	5.74	1	0
Singapore	2	5.63	3	1
Sweden	3	5.61	2	-1
Finland	4	5.47	7	3
United States	5	5.43	4	-1
Germany	6	5.41	5	-1
Netherlands	7	5.41	8	1
Denmark	8	5.40	9	1
Japan	9	5.40	6	-3
United Kingdom	10	5.39	12	2
Hong Kong SAR	11	5.36	11	0
Canada	12	5.33	10	-2
Taiwan, China	13	5.26	13	0
Qatar	14	5.24	17	3
Belgium	15	5.20	19	4
Norway	16	5.18	14	-2
Saudi Arabia	17	5.17	21	4
France	18	5.14	15	-3
Austria	19	5.14	18	-1
Australia	20	5.11	16	-4
Malaysia	21	5.08	26	5
Israel	22	5.07	24	2
Luxembourg	23	5.03	20	-3
Korea, Rep.	24	5.02	22	-2
New Zealand	25	4.93	23	-2
China	26	4.90	27	1
United Arab Emirates	27	4.89	25	-2
Brunei Darussalam	28	4.78	28	0
Ireland	29	4.77	29	0
Iceland	30	4.75	31	1

increased budgetary discipline with a view to reducing debt levels would help the country maintain stability and support economic growth going into the future.

Looking at the 21 countries ranked ahead of Israel, it is in pretty good company, with future competition being Switzerland (ranked number 1), the United States and Germany (5th and 6th respectively) and Japan at ninth place. Israel was placed ahead of such countries as Korea (24), China (26), and the United Arab Emirates (27), Brazil (53), and India (56). Chad was placed last at 142.

According to the report, Israel's main advantages include: Quality of scientific research institutions; venture capital availability (ranked 2nd in the world); utility patents per million population (ranked 4th in the world); life expectancy; strength of investor protection; government procurement of advanced tech products; capacity for innovation (ranked 6th in the world); university-industry collaboration in research and development; nature of competitive advantage; legal rights index; and, availability of scientists and engineers.