



# ISRAEL MATTERS!

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## Jewish Agency: Trying to Bring All Iranian Jews to Israel

### Egypt Accuses Israel of Meddling With US Ties

Egypt accused Israel of interfering in its relations with the United States as tensions rose over arms smuggling into Gaza. A spokesman for Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said "Egypt rejects and denounces the Israeli government's interference in the US Congress's decision to suspend 100 million dollars in military aid to Egypt."

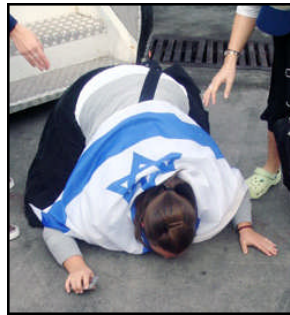
In December the US Congress froze the aid until US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice could certify that Egypt was doing enough to stem the flow of arms into the Gaza Strip where Hamas took over in June.

An Israeli representative rejected the charges, saying "Israel has never acted in that way and will never do so because in the end our joint interests are much stronger than this issue." Former prime minister Ehud Barak who was to meet Mubarak said "Peace with Egypt is a strategic asset to both sides and as in the past when there have been disputes they had to be worked out."

A senior defense ministry official traveling with Barak said Israeli officials had handed over to Egyptian security services "an array of evidence and intelligence reports on weapons smuggling". The evidence included video footage of Egyptian border police allegedly helping militants cross into Gaza.

Israel has often accused Egypt of doing too little to counter alleged arms smuggling via tunnels dug from Gaza into Egyptian territory. Cairo has denied the charge.

The Jewish Agency is working to bring all of Iran's remaining 25,000 Jews to Israel, an official told The Jerusalem Post as 40 immigrants landed at Ben-Gurion International Airport. The December 25th arrival was the largest single group of Iranian immigrants brought by the agency to start new lives in a country that Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has vowed to wipe off the face of the earth.



The Jews of Iran were "starting to feel the earth burn beneath their feet" in a growing atmosphere of anti-Semitism, said Yossi Shraga, director of Middle East immigration at the Jewish Agency. An estimated 25,000 Jews remain in Iran, most of them living in Teheran, Isfahan and Shiraz. Teheran has the largest Iranian Jewish community, comprising some 15,000 people.

Each Iranian immigrant ("oleh") will receive a \$10,000 gift from the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews upon entering Israel, in addition to the usual immigration benefits provided by the Immigrant Absorption Ministry. The money, part of a campaign launched by IFCJ President Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, will be given to each individual, and was, for some of the new immigrants, a deciding factor in making the decision to leave Iran and settle in Israel.

Iranians who leave Iran can appoint legal custodians to manage their assets, but if they don't, their assets are transferred to the state. However, according to sources familiar with their immigration process, the 40 new arrivals - 10 families and three singles, mostly from a middle to lower-middle financial bracket - have not appointed any such custodian. Some will lose their assets entirely.

"The Jewish Agency has spared no expense in bringing the Jews of Iran and will work to bring the rest of them to Israel. The atmosphere in Iran has done the work for us. Anti-Semitism in Iran is growing from day to day. Jewish schools have been shut down and a ban has been ordered on the learning and teaching of the Hebrew language," Shraga stated. "This is not the place where they want to live. Through the Jewish Agency, I hope we can bring them all."

The immigrants arrived at the airport from a third country which the media has not been allowed to identify. Similarly, the delicate and complex method by which the group was gathered and processed for aliya was not reported. While Israel and Iran have no diplomatic relations, to date the Iranian authorities have not tried to stop Iranian Jews from leaving the country.

## **The Real Israel:**

- Israel has the highest ratio of university degrees to the population in the world.
- Israel produces more scientific papers per capita - 109 per 10,000 - than any other nation.
- Israel has the highest number of startup companies per rata.
- Israel has the highest concentration of hi-tech companies outside of Silicon Valley.
- Israel is ranked #2 in the world for venture capital funds, behind the USA.
- Israel has more museums per capita .
- Israel has the second highest publication of new books per capita.
- Relative to population, Israel is the largest immigrant absorbing nation on earth.
- Israel is the only country in the world that had a net gain in the number of trees last year.
- A researcher at Israel's Ben Gurion University has succeeded in creating human monoclonal antibodies which can neutralize the highly contagious smallpox virus without inducing the dangerous side effects of the existing vaccine.
- Two Israelis received the 2004 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. Doctors Ciechanover and Hershko's research and discovery of one of the human cells most important cyclical processes will lead the way to DNA repair, control of newly produced proteins, and immune defense systems.
- The Movement Disorder Surgery program at Israel's Hadassah Medical Center has successfully eliminated the physical manifestations of Parkinson's disease in a select group of patients with a deep brain stimulation technique.
- For women who undergo hysterectomies each year for the treatment of uterine fibroids, the development in Israel of the Ex Ablate 2000 System offers a noninvasive alternative to surgery.
- Israeli scientists are developing a nose drop that will provide a five year flu vaccine.
- Most of Windows operating systems were developed by Microsoft-Israel. The Pentium NMX Chip technology was designed at Intel in Israel. Both the Pentium 4 microprocessor and the Centrum processor were entirely designed, developed, and produced in Israel.
- Cell phone technology was developed in Israel by Motorola which has its biggest development center there.

## **Israeli Hummus - Snack Food for America**

It's practically a national sport in Israel. At sidewalk cafes, and at bustling fast food joints, diners enjoy the fine art of sopping up delicious plates of hummus and tehina with freshly baked pita. Truly a wonder food, hummus is rich in vitamins, high in protein and fiber and free of trans fats - and prepared Israeli style, it tastes fantastic.

Americans and Canadians can begin preparing their bread in dipping position because fast food giant PepsiCo announced that it had signed an agreement to operate the Israeli-owned brand of Sabra Middle Eastern dip products in North America under its Frito-Lay snack food division.

The agreement, worth \$45 million, will bring the Sabra line of chickpea and eggplant-based dips and spreads produced directly to American grocery shelves alongside other Frito-Lay products like potato chips, salsas and popcorn.

"It builds on our health and wellness portfolio," Aurora Gonzalez, a spokeswoman for Frito-Lay, told The Dallas Morning News. "This fits well with the direction that Frito-Lay and PepsiCo have been taking with health and wellness."

Hummus is a dip or spread made of mashed chickpeas, sesame tahini, lemon juice, and garlic, and is a staple not only in Israel but throughout the Middle East and Mediterranean countries. Sabra, the top-selling and fastest growing hummus brand in the US, was founded in 1986 as an American outlet for Middle Eastern-style salads catering to New York residents craving genuine Israeli cuisine.

## **London's "The Sunday Times" Recommends Israeli Stocks**

Israel's stock market will be "thrust into the limelight this year," reported The Sunday Times in a market review entitled 25 ways to make a profit in 2008.

Against the backdrop of the turbulence in the markets, soaring energy prices, and fears that the US is on the verge of a recession, The Sunday Times asked a panel of experts how they would beat the market in view of the sharp declines in the US. The experts selected Israel, Russia, Brazil and South Korea, among other markets.

The paper reported that British investors have tended to ignore Israel, but its stock market will be thrust into the limelight this year when Israel is promoted from emerging to developed market status.

We hope you enjoy reading *Israel Matters!* Please let us know if there are any issues involving Israel that you would like to see addressed in *Israel Matters!* We look forward to your comments. Send them by email to Ed and Randy Berns, Co-chairs of the TBS Israel Affairs Committee, at: [redberns@sbcglobal.net](mailto:redberns@sbcglobal.net)