



Eight years of snubs to Israel

On September 29 the White House released the speech that President Barack Obama addressed at the funeral of Shimon Peres, the last of the founding fathers of the Jewish state, and indicated the place of the event: "Jerusalem, Israel". It was a press statement under normality until it was perplexingly amended hours later and spread again with the word "Israel" crossed out.

The American policy since 1949 is not to recognize Jerusalem as belonging to any nation until its final status is resolved within the framework of peace negotiations, and it is a legitimate position to have on the issue, of course. However, Shimon Peres was buried on Mount Herzl, which is located in West Jerusalem —where most of the historical leaders of Israel are buried, from Herzl himself to Isaac Rabin to thousands of military who died for its country— a part of Jerusalem not claimed even by the Palestinian Authority. Besides, even though the US has its embassy in Tel Aviv, it also has a Consulate in Jerusalem; and the US Congress passed a law in 1995 calling for the embassy to be moved to Jerusalem —but since then the presidents prevented the change by using their waiver authority. There should be no problem with the status of West Jerusalem or with its location, above all in the policy guidelines of the supposed-to-be the closest ally of Israel. West Jerusalem is part of Israel —and will be—and that is something not even questioned by Palestinian legitimate representatives. Now, considering the U.S. official position on Jerusalem, this unexpected gesture, before the burial of an international prominent and popular figure such as Shimon Peres, seems, at least, an insult. Not recognizing that West Jerusalem is part of Israel places the U.S.'s narrative alongside with fiercest enemies of Israel.

In sum, this move has been incomprehensible and absurd, as Elliot Abrams, former advisor to Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, has pointed out. Nevertheless, the problem is wider. This is not the only snub made by the Obama Administration to Israel, but a reflection of an attitude that has been repeated over the last eight years.

The Obama Administration approach with Israel during this time has not been precisely friendly and sincere. The two countries supposed to have an "unbreakable bond", as Obama himself has stated several times; nonetheless, over the last peace negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, which collapsed in 2014 thanks to the efforts of the Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas to refuse to sit with Israel at the same table, the Obama administration, followed by the top European Union members, put all the pressure on Israel and rewarded the rejectionist attitude — and far from coexistence with Israelis— of the Palestinians.

In this regard, in his last speech to the UN General Assembly, Barack Obama placed on an equal footing the

construction of houses in the disputed territories (the West Bank) and the incitement and violence carried out by Palestinian terrorist groups against innocent Israeli civilians —applauded by political Palestinian leaders as well. The U.S. President also forgot to mention the unhealthy obsession of the certain and important bodies of the U.N. with Israel. This sad reality was reflected again in the opening speech of the U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon who laid all the blame on Israel and did not mention even once the Palestinian violence or incitement nowadays, which are the real obstacle to peace with Israelis. Those words by the Secretary General confirm the U.N obsession with Israel and, by the way, push the peace with Palestinians even farther away, and the Obama's words did not amend it.

The strategy adopted to force a peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians is not the only issue where the focus of Obama's policy towards Israel has not been the proper one of a close ally. The bad nuclear deal signed with Iran in July 2015, led by the Obama Administration, has boosted the most dangerous problem that Israel faces today.

In addition to the breaches that Iran has committed only one year after signing the agreement, the emergence of the ayatollahs' regime in the Middle East as a hegemon has left Israel in a complicated strategic and security position. Once again, Israel is abandoned alone in an inhospitable environment that will be characterized by the increased sectarian Sunni-Shiite conflict and a dismemberment of the Sykes-Picot states in favor of a non-conventional, terrorist, expansionist and barbaric actors such as the Islamic State. This diffuse and bleak scenario for the Middle East in the coming years may be fatal to Israel, and the Obama Administration has a high responsibility on this.

The next occupant of the White House will have to, among other things, rethink the relationship with Israel, so rarefied over the past eight years. While the military, intelligence, and technological collaboration have grown between the two countries, the political relationship has gone through incomprehensible moments like this inexplicable incident after the funeral of Shimon Peres. Also, the next President will face a hard truth, Obama's legacy in Israel and in the Middle East, in short, has not been positive, and he or she will have to understand that Israel's struggle is the West's struggle, and, in order to overcome all the common challenges and threats, the support to Israel has to be consistent.

One Year after the Nuclear Deal

A year after the signature of the JCPOA, the so-called nuclear deal, Iran's attitude has proved that we were right to warn about a bad and pernicious agreement.

First, as the latest report of the IAEA has shown, the monitoring of the nuclear program is insufficient and Iran is already building new rotors for centrifuges, which makes clear its intentions for the future. In fact, according to Michael Singh, senior fellow of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Iran plans to expand its nuclear program for military purposes in 2027, just as the JCPOA expires. According to nuclear security expert Ephraim Asculai, within ten years, the breakout time for Iran to build a nuclear bomb will be just two months.

Second, to believe that Iran will change its behavior during the implementation of the JCPOA has been a bad bet of the P5 + 1 group, led by the United States. Moderates have not won power in the regime, Iran continues to be involved in regional conflicts in the Middle East through its proxies; according to the State Department, Iran also remains the main sponsor of terrorism in the world, and it holds one of the world's top records in human rights violations. The lifting of sanctions, the unfreezing of assets, and the opening of the Iranian market to the world will only empower the hard-liners in the regime, as Singh outlined.

Third, over the implementation of the JCPOA, Iran can easily become a hegemon in the Middle East, which will harm the little stability that the region currently enjoys. In this regard, to leave the stability of the region under the balance of power between Sunnis and Shiites is a bad strategy that will only bring more chaos and insecurity. In August 2015, Robert Einhorn, former negotiator of the Obama Administration in the nuclear deal, described his concern that the funds released would allow Iran "to allocate substantial additional resources that will destabilize its neighbors and will expand its regional influence."

In addition to all the bad consequences of the agreement, Iran has breached the JCPOA throughout this year. Among the most notable failures, Iran has tested ballistic missiles that can carry nuclear warheads; Tehran keeps smuggling nuclear material, according to German intelligence, the ayatollahs deny access to nuclear inspectors to some sensitive sites such as Parchin, as Bret Stephens reported in *The Wall Street Journal* and it is accumulating more heavy water than what is permitted by the JCPOA.

As of today, the nuclear deal has not achieved any of its ambitious goals. Before the Iranian attitude, Mark Dubowitz, Executive Director of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, commented; "I'm a little surprised that (...) [they] have been so bold in the first year (...) in ramping up (...) their aggression in the region, [in the promotion] of regional terrorism, [in relation to] missile tests and human rights abuses ... thought I would have played fair for a couple of years."

Despite the lofty promises and high hopes of the deal's supporters, a year after the nuclear deal, far from being better, the resulting situation is worse – worse for international security, worse for nuclear non-proliferation, worse for regional stability, and, above all, worse for the people of Iran. Iran has not become a regular nation-state in the international community; it has breached the JCPOA and associated agreements. Neither has Iran changed course in the region nor has it made any significant steps towards easing repression domestically.

Every aspect of the JCPOA about which The Friends of Israel Initiative warned is becoming real. In this regard, alongside the Henry Jackson Society, we launched a report ([available here](#)) last July in which we examine in more

detail what happened last year and what the future would bring after this bad deal. Due to the alarming forecast, we shall continue to monitor Iran and will continue supporting democracy and human rights in the Middle East as a way to counter Iran's malign activities and growing power.

Spotlight

The UNESCO and the Jewish Historical Ties to the Land of Israel

In the last meeting of UNESCO's Executive Board on the matter, held on April 15, a unilateral resolution was adopted condemning the "aggression and illegal Israeli measures against freedom of worship and access of Muslims to their holy site of al-Aqsa / Al-Haram al-Sharif" and blamed Israel for violating the status quo on the Temple Mount. Moreover, the resolution reaffirmed that the Cave of the Patriarchs and Rachel's Tomb are "integral parts" of an emerging Palestinian state.

On July 12, Jordan and the Palestinians proposed a draft resolution on Jerusalem for the World Heritage Committee, in which the connection of Jerusalem and its holy places, as the Temple Mount, to the Jewish People was rejected. In response, the European Union proposed an alternative text, but it also denied the Jewish connection to Jerusalem. UNESCO's World Heritage Committee has postponed the vote on Jerusalem until October 24-26 and, at The Friends of Israel Initiative, we fear that the connection of the Jewish People with its holy places, such as the Temple Mount, will be denied again by UNESCO.

One of UNESCO's key goals is to promote cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, and a culture of peace. However, UNESCO has self-positioned in favor of one of the parties in the conflict, the Palestinians, and is trying to deny Israelis and the Jewish people any historical and cultural connection to Jerusalem. UNESCO has failed in its goal and has turned away peace and dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians.

UNESCO has also failed in another of its founding goals, which is to "maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge by assuring the conservation and protection of the world's inheritance of books, works of art and monuments of history and science, and recommending to the nations concerned the necessary international conventions." In this regard, the resolution adopted on April 14 refers repeatedly to the Temple Mount, Judaism's holiest site, as "Al-Haram al-Sharif," its Arabic name, with the biased purpose of denying any ancient link between a people and its holy places universally recognized by all historical and archaeological authorities.

UNESCO should know that Israel is the only Middle-Eastern country where freedom of religion is respected and promoted. The resolution of UNESCO's Executive Board sought to eradicate any link between the Jewish people and historical sites such as the Temple Mount, Rachel's Tomb, and the Cave of the Patriarchs. Denying such a link is as absurd as denying the connection of Muslims with Mecca or the connection of Christians with the Holy Sepulchre.

As noted, UNESCO is an international organization dedicated to education, science and culture; however, it promotes such resolutions against all historical and archaeological rigors and also helps to further alienate the positions of both peoples. This attitude of UNESCO is absolute nonsense against history and archeology, against the unbreakable connection of the Jewish people to Jerusalem and against the values of peace and coexistence.

The Friends of Israel Initiative strongly disagrees with UNESCO's approach in recent months on Jerusalem and its connection to the Jewish people, and warns that this path leads only to prolong the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. UNESCO should reconsider its position and adopt a more impartial approach to politics and a more rigorous approach to history.

FOII'S ACTIVITIES

Working Papers

Turkey: *Quo Vadis*

Dr. Shmuel Bar explains all we need to know in order to understand the coup d'etat in Turkey, its aftermath, Erdogan's motivation, the emerging role of the country in the Middle East, the regional and international consequences, its involvement in the Syrian policy and its relation with the West.

[Read](#) Dr. Shmuel Bar's Working Paper regarding this issue.

Peace Requires New Approaches

The stagnation of the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians is a sad reality. In this regard, the formula adopted by the international community in order to achieve peace has been the two-state solution. However, perhaps it is time to innovate and adopt new approaches to create the necessary conditions for lasting and fair coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians.

[Read](#) The Friends of Israel Initiative's new ideas regarding this goal.

Europe: Pressure on Israel, Indulgence for the Palestinians

After the Paris Summit on the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians last June, which neither of them attended it, Douglas Murray analyzes how Europe has put all the pressure on Israel but has shown irresponsible indulgence with the Palestinians and all the plans of the international community (the U.N., the United States, and the Quarter for Peace) to restart the peace talks. Murray asserts that any imposed foreign initiative to the parties would make no difference for the facts on the ground.

[Read](#) Douglas Murray's Working Paper regarding this issue.

Visitors Program

LATAM Network Leaders Visit to Israel

Latin America has been a place of interest and focus for FOII over the years. In this regard, FOII has reached out to political leaders, opinion makers, and experts in order to promote relations with Israel and all the benefits that such ties can yield. For that purpose, FOII established the LATAM Network and organized visits to Israel.

Thus, as a continuation of the Visitors Program, a group of key Latin-American figures, from the business and political fields, visited Israel September 26-30, in order to experience first hand all the potential that the Jewish State has to offer to the many problems they are experiencing in their respective countries. The visit focused on innovation, security cooperation, high-tech advances, among others, and the participants met with Israeli counterparts to share their views and skills.

Op-eds

Professor Andrew Roberts "Ken Livingstone Gets the History Wrong on Anti-Semitism and Hitler" - CAPX, May 3.
Read the [op-ed](#).

Giulio Terzi and Joseph I. Lieberman "Iran Is as Belligerent as Ever" - Israel Hayom, June 30
Read the [op-ed](#).

Rafael Bardají, "9/11: Jihadism and Us 15 Years Later" - Libertad Digital, September 11
Read the [op-ed](#).



"What the United States has to do is send a clear message to Iran that they will not be able to develop nuclear weapons."

Alan Dershowitz

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