



# ISRAEL MATTERS!

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



Issue Number 139  
January 2020

## Turkey's Erdogan Bashes Israel and Calls on Muslims to Unite Against the West

In first, Israel's former Chief Rabbi participates in Bahrain religious forum



Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem Shlomo Amar [photo, left], who previously served as chief Sephardic rabbi for Israel, recently met Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, as part of a visit to the country's capital of Manama.

Hebrew-language public broadcaster Kan reported that this visit is "the first of its kind," noting that Amar "conveyed to the King congratulations from Jerusalem."

The Jewish cleric participated in the religious forum, along with clerics from Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, and other Arab and Islamic countries, Kan reported Tuesday.

At the event, the Rabbi expressed hope that Israelis and Bahrainis would be able to visit each other's countries without the need for special coordination.

Municipal rabbis are considered official representatives of the State of Israel but not of its government.

According to the report, Israeli and US politicians helped set up Amar's trip to the Arab country despite the lack of diplomatic relations with the Jewish state. Bahrain is one of the Gulf states' that is changing its attitude most favorably toward the Jewish state.

"Middle East nations want peace with Israel; the leadership should promote that without fear," Amar said during his stay, expressing hope that in the future, such visits would not require special preparation.

[timesofisrael.com and I24News.tv]

In a recent speech to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan slammed Israel and called for Islamic unity among the "brothers and sisters" to confront the West and conspiracies against Islamic countries. Turkey's ruler insinuated that Turkey was a victim of "terrorist attacks" because of its "principled stance" against "oppression in Jerusalem."

Ankara claimed it is the "lone voice" standing up for Palestinians today. Turkey has warm relations with Hamas. The Hamas member Saleh Arouri arrived in Turkey on Sunday. He has been accused of involvement in kidnapping, murder, and other forms of terrorism in 2014. Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas also came to Turkey with Arouri and Moussa Abu Marzouk and others as part of a large delegation. Ankara has asked NATO to condemn terrorism but hosts Hamas.

Erdogan claimed that Israel was making the "situation in Jerusalem and Palestine" worse every day. He said that Israel doesn't recognize justice, law, rights or humanity and that this "deepens the crisis in the region against Muslims." Turkey is seeking to champion Islamic countries against Israel, Ankara claimed. "We will never stop defending the rights of the Palestinians and standing in solidarity with all the oppressed." Turkey is involved in an expanding military campaign and occupation of northern Syria that has caused more than 150,000 people to flee Afrin in 2018, and 200,000 to flee areas near Tel Abyad in recent months. Turkey doesn't see those people as oppressed, according to the speech.

Turkey's leader claimed that the country wants to "better protect children, women, elderly, and disabled against western threats." In this part of the speech he stressed conservative, far-right and family value themes, arguing

(Continued)

that the West was attacking the concept of the family. “The more we protect our family structure,” Turkey’s leader said, indicating that “We will never stop defending the rights of the Palestinians and standing in solidarity with all the oppressed,” he said.

Erdogan said that the imperialist approach of divide, disintegrate, and rule continues in Islamic countries.

“The better we protect children, women, elderly and disabled against western threats, the more we protect our family structure,” he said, arguing that western imperialists were seeking to divide and rule the Islamic world. Erdogan also claimed that Muslims are one quarter of the world but are isolated and that Muslims must unite to push their political influence and “cultural prowess” to bring Islamic civilization to its “rightful place.”

Recently Erdogan inaugurated a mosque in the UK to showcase his devotion to these causes.

It has been reported that Erdogan said Muslim countries should work together to fight poverty, but it was a challenge, “which means 350 million brothers and sisters are trying to hold onto life at the poverty level.” Erdogan then said that the wealthiest Muslim country, probably one of those that is in the Gulf, is 200 times richer than the poorest. He encouraged more Islamic charity. Turkey is a key ally of Qatar, a country that may need to give more charity than it has been. Qatar has been accused of exploiting workers and paying low wages to poor foreigners who come to work construction but lack basic rights in Doha.

Erdogan’s speech was a way for Ankara to cement itself as a global champion of Islamic causes. Recently Turkey has spoken out about Kashmir and Muslims in China and has also sought to rally countries around Jerusalem to oppose US President Donald Trump’s policies and Israel’s policies.

So far, Turkey’s attempt to become a new global Islamic leader has not materialized. Turkey nevertheless tries to work with Malaysia, Pakistan, and some other countries that are becoming more nationalist, far right, and conservative, seeking to create a front of political Islam, often linked to the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, as part of a larger agenda. Turkey’s current ruling party sees itself as an economic model for other countries and seeks to expand its power in Syria, Iraq, and other countries, while working with Iran and Russia.

[jpost.com]

## Israel sends team to Samoa to help battle measles outbreak

Israel is sending an emergency medical team to help Samoa contain its deadly measles epidemic, Israel’s ambassador to the Pacific nation announced recently. “Israel is sending an emergency medical team in coordination with the World Health organization (WHO) to Samoa in response to the Samoan measles outbreak. Israel is committed to supporting our dear friend Samoa in this crisis,” tweeted Ambassador Itzhak Gerberg.

At least 63 people, mostly children, have died since the outbreak began in mid-October, with the crisis blamed on so-called “anti-vaxxers” convincing parents that immunization was dangerous.

Samoaan authorities warned that anti-vaccine propaganda would not be tolerated, after a social media campaigner was arrested for opposing the mass immunization drive. The government has special powers after declaring a state of emergency to deal with the measles crisis and the Samoa Observer reported that the campaigner could face two years in jail.

The health ministry recently reported 140 new cases over the previous 24 hours. One more person died, bringing the confirmed death toll to 63, with 55 of the victims aged four or under. Twenty children were critically ill in hospital, according to the ministry. Infants are the most vulnerable to measles, which typically causes a rash and fever but can also lead to brain damage and death.

Samoa’s measles immunization rate dropped to about 30 percent after an incident last year involving the death of two babies that anti-vaxxers incorrectly blamed on the medication.

Israel itself is also suffering from a measles outbreak — the WHO says 3,755 Israelis were diagnosed with measles between April 2018 and March 2019. By July, the Israeli Health Ministry pegged the number of local measles cases at 4,292. The latest outbreak has so far claimed three lives in Israel. In November 2018, an 18-month-old toddler who was not vaccinated succumbed to it, becoming the first recorded measles-related death in Israel in 15 years. In December 2018, the disease claimed an 82-year-old woman, and in August 2019, Israeli flight attendant Rotem Amitai, 43, who had contracted measles on a flight from New York in late March, became the third fatality of the outbreak.

[timesofisrael.com]