



ISRAEL MATTERS!

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Berlusconi Vows Italy's Firm Support for Israel

Massachusetts Elects Strong Pro-Israel Senator

Republican Senator Scott Brown shocked the Obama administration with a stunning victory in a special election to fill the seat of the late Senator Edward Kennedy. Brown's strong pro-Israel stand apparently resonated among voters that elected the first Republican senator from Massachusetts in decades. Jewish and non-Jewish support for President Obama's Middle East policies has fallen sharply since his "reaching out to the Muslim world" speech in Cairo last June.

Brown's position paper on Israel stated, "I stand steadfastly behind Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from state and non-state actors alike. I oppose the rising tide of efforts worldwide aimed at undermining this fundamental right. The United Nations' commissioned Goldstone Report is a blatant manifestation of such an effort. Deeply flawed from the start, the 'report' accuses Israel of war crimes with little reference to the fact that Israel held its fire for years while thousands of rockets were fired at innocent civilians."

"I also firmly support the security barrier erected by Israel which has proven to be enormously successful at defending and protecting Israeli civilians against waves of deadly terrorist attacks ... I unequivocally support the recently executed ten-year memorandum of understanding between the United States and Israel which will provide \$30 billion in military aid to Israel until 2017." Brown also said a strict return to Israel's 1967 borders is both unrealistic and unsafe and he reaffirmed Jerusalem as the undivided capital of the State of Israel.



During his visit to Israel in February, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi (pictured, at right) pledged his country's firm support for Israel, urging "effective sanctions" against its arch-foe Iran and speaking out against a damning UN report on the Gaza war. In a speech before a special session of the Knesset, Berlusconi said Israel "is not only the biggest example of democracy and liberty in the Middle East, but the only example." Moreover, that "the security of Israel ... is for us Italians an ethical and moral imperative."

On the issue of Israel's arch-foe Iran, Berlusconi called for "resolute negotiations" and "effective sanctions" over Tehran's controversial nuclear program, adding that the international community must seek iron-clad guarantees from the Islamic Republic. "The entire international community must decide to state clearly, unequivocally and unanimously that it is unacceptable that nuclear weapons should be in the hands of a state whose leaders have openly proclaimed the will to destroy Israel and have denied both the Holocaust and the legitimacy of the Jewish state," he said.

Berlusconi's speech before the Knesset was an honor bestowed on few world leaders and a sign of the friendship between the two nations that has grown much closer under his stewardship. The Italian leader drew a warm round of applause when he declared: "We, the free and liberal people across the world, thank you (Israel) for your very existence."

Before Berlusconi spoke, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (pictured, at left) hailed him "as a courageous leader who always stands by Israel's side." Netanyahu concluded his speech filled with praise for Berlusconi with a story of a heavily pregnant Italian woman who confronted a German officer during World War II and, at great peril to her own life, persuaded him to let an arrested Jewish woman go. This woman's actions "saved the life of the Jewish woman and cast, if only for a brief moment, a scintilla of humanity and courage upon the great darkness that enveloped the whole of Europe at that time," Netanyahu said. "That courageous woman's name was Rosa. And one of her children is called Silvio Berlusconi, today the prime minister of Italy." Netanyahu concluded his remarks by telling Berlusconi that, "We appreciate you. We embrace you. We love you." The two men embraced, and the Italian leader took out a white handkerchief to wipe tears from his eyes.

Israel and Germany Hold Historic Joint Cabinet Meeting

During February, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently traveled to Germany with top ministers for a historic joint cabinet meeting underlining the strong ties forged in the wake of the Holocaust. The gathering of the two governments, the second ever after a similar meeting in Israel two years ago and the first on German soil, was to address issues such as Iran's nuclear drive and defense cooperation. Netanyahu and German Chancellor Angela Merkel also held bilateral talks focused on efforts to revive Middle East peace talks and face "threats to regional security," the prime minister's spokesman Mark Regev said. The one-day visit to Berlin, where the bid to wipe out European Jewry was planned, was "designed to strengthen and expand the cooperation between Israel and Germany."



Israeli Science Minister Daniel Hershkowitz, whose parents survived Nazi death camps during World War II, joined the delegation as it toured the Holocaust Memorial in central Berlin (photo, left) at the start of the visit. "We don't forget the past. This is a past that cannot be forgotten but today Germany is a great friend of Israel," he said. Hershkowitz said the visit "is the answer to those who 70 years ago wanted to eliminate us."

The prime minister presented Merkel with an abstract inscription of the Jewish prayer of mourning Kaddish by Holocaust survivor Fishel Rabinowicz. "From the prayer of the dead comes a prayer for life," Netanyahu told reporters.

Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman were among members of Israel's center-right cabinet touring with him. Media widely reported that Israel has ordered a sixth Dolphin-class diesel submarine from Germany. Israel currently has three Dolphins and has confirmed it ordered two more. The submarines are believed to have a range of 4,500 kilometres (2,800 miles) and the capacity to launch nuclear-capable cruise missiles. "We attach great importance to our ties with Germany because of their economic and political impact and mainly because of Israel's security," Netanyahu told reporters ahead of his trip.

Germany is playing a leading role in efforts to broker a prisoner exchange between Israel and the Islamist Hamas movement for an Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, held captive by the Hamas regime in the Gaza Strip since 2006. Germany is Israel's third biggest trade partner after the United States and China and is widely considered its strongest ally in Europe. Merkel and several of her ministers made a similar visit to Jerusalem in March 2008 during which the chancellor addressed the Knesset and expressed her shame for the Nazis' systematic slaughter of six million Jews.

Israel's Omri Casspi is King in NYC

On February 10th, the first Israeli player in the NBA received boisterous support at Madison Square Garden. Omri Casspi, who is having a strong rookie season for the Sacramento Kings, heard loud cheers and chants on what was billed minutes and contributed 18 points 118-114 overtime victory over the

The importance of being the first Is- of the draft (23rd overall) and to ap- Casspi, one of only two active Jewish point guard Jordan Farmar, the out on to the court. There's a lot of and Israeli and I feel happy and in a question-and-answer session Knicks, adding that he "can't be more NBA.

"This is not a regular game for me strong ... show the coach and every- basketball," Casspi said. Several in New York hosted a reception for



season for the Sacramento Kings, heard loud as Jewish Heritage Night. Casspi, played 45 and 9 rebounds as the Kings rallied for a New York Knicks.

raeli player to be selected in the first round pear in an NBA game was not been lost on players in the league (Los Angeles Lakers other). "It's a great feeling every time I step pride and responsibility [in being] Jewish blessed," he told a crowd of passionate fans prior to the tip-off against the New York thankful and grateful" to be playing in the

and it was important for me to start body that I am here to play and focus on hours before the game, the Israeli Consulate Casspi.

At the question-and-answer session and shootaround before the game, he was quoted as saying that the Kings' players look out for him. Casspi was chosen to play in the Rookie Challenge against the top second-year players during All-Star Weekend. He is averaging 12 points and 5 rebounds per game.

Clinton Praises Work of Israeli Medics in Haitian Hospital

Israel's rescue operations in Haiti has received praise from former US president Bill Clinton. Acting in his role as the UN Secretary General's Special Emissary to the Caribbean disaster zone, Clinton mentioned the Israeli hospital at a session on philanthropy at the International Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland, in which Israeli President Shimon Peres was also a member of the panel.



Addressing Peres, Clinton said, "Shimon, I don't know what we would have done without the Israeli hospital in Haiti. The Israeli hospital was the only operational facility which was able to perform surgery and advanced tests." Clinton added that "in the name of the aid workers that operated in Haiti, in the name of the people who live there, and on a personal level I want to thank, we all want to thank, Israel from the bottom of our hearts."

Peres responded by saying that "Israel will be happy to offer all of its abilities in assisting the rehabilitation of the island." After the plenary session Peres met with Clinton and the two discussed in detail the ways in which Israel could assist the international effort in Haiti.

Israeli Experts To Work With NASA On Moon Research

A joint declaration by the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the Israel Space Agency was recently signed that will make Israel a member of the NASA Center for Moon Research and promote cooperation between the two agencies.

NASA director Charles Bolden came to Israel also to attend the Fifth International Ilan Ramon Conference at the Fischer Institute for Strategic Research in Herzliya. The conference is held in memory of Israel Air Force Col. Ilan Ramon, who died when NASA's Columbia space shuttle crashed seven years ago. The agreement recognizes the Israel Network for Lunar Science and Exploration (INLSE) and establishes the country as a part of an international effort to study the moon and the solar system.

NASA was eager to have INLSE on board because it offers important research involving lasers, the development of advanced sensors for solar system research tasks and automatic vehicle navigation. Special emphasis was put in the declaration on scientific discoveries involving miniature radar technologies, in which Israelis are leading experts. Science and Technology Minister Prof. Daniel Herschkowitz stated that Israel is a "power in the field of science, and there are quite a few technologies in which it leads the world, such as propulsion systems for satellites, micro-satellites, light-weight satellites, advanced multi-layer cameras and more." He went on to say that "the Americans are very interested in integrating Israeli know how and technology into their projects, and there is much importance and value in our cooperation."

Hamass Accuses Israel of Assassinating Arch-Terrorist



Hamass Deputy Political Bureau Chief Moussa Abu Marzouk accused the Mossad of responsibility for the January 20th assassination of Hamass founder and military commander Mahmoud al-Mabhouh (photo, left) in Dubai. The Hamass statement recently released from Damascus did not mention how the assassination was carried out. Mahmoud al-Mabhouh was responsible for the kidnappings of IDF soldiers Ilan Sa'adon and Avi Sasportas more than 20 years ago.

The arch-terrorist's body was brought to Damascus after he was found dead on January 20 in Dubai, where he had served as a representative of the Hamass military wing abroad. Al-Mabhouh had been expelled from Israel in 1989 for involvement in terrorist activities against the state. Hamass announced that it opened an investigation into the circumstances of his death and that the Islamic group is working closely with local authorities to catch who they believe to be an agent of the Israeli Mossad.

In eulogizing al-Mabhouh, Hamass Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh told mourners in the northern Gaza region that the slain terrorist was the first to plan the act of abducting Israeli soldiers, a reference to captured IDF soldier Gilad Shalit who is currently being held captive by the Hamass regime in Gaza.

Both Avi Sasportas and Ilan Sa'adon were kidnapped and killed during 1989 by Hamass fighters loyal to Mahmoud al-Mabhouh. Sasportas was kidnapped at the Hedaya junction while on his way home to Ashdod. He was shot and then buried on the side of the road. Three months later, Sa'adon was captured at a junction near Kiryat Malachi. The day after searches began for Sa'adon, the body of Sasportas – then considered missing – was discovered. Sa'adon's body was found seven years later buried eight meters deep under a paved road south of Rishon L'Tzion.

As is its policy, Israel has not confirmed or denied involvement in al-Mabhouh's assassination.