



# ISRAEL MATTERS!

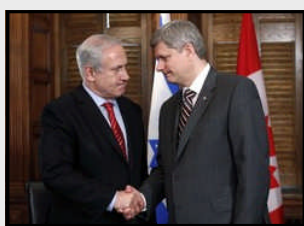
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## Obama: Israel's 1967 Borders as Starting Point for Peace Deal

### Canada Backs Israel on 1967 Borders



Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper [photo, right with Israeli PM Netanyahu] has rejected President Obama's vision for Israel-Palestinian peace talks to be based on Israel's borders that existed prior to the 1967 Six Day War. At its recent meeting in

France, the G8 leaders issued a communiqué supporting Obama's vision for the Israel-Palestinian talks but omitted a key section which stated the negotiations should be based on the 1967 borders with agreed land swaps.

It was later confirmed that Harper had strongly objected to the 1967 borders. Reuters reported the other leaders wanted the terminology but Canada was insistent. The communiqué was then released without the wording.

Israel was overjoyed at the Canadian intervention which prompted Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman to telephone Harper to thank him for his support. "Canada is a true friend of Israel," Lieberman told Harper, adding that "you understand that the 1967 lines are inconsistent with Israel's security needs." Mr. Lieberman invited the Canadian prime minister to visit Israel.

Canada's strong backing for Israel was cited by diplomats last year as one reason why Canada failed to win a rotating two-year seat on the United Nations Security Council. At a speech against anti-Semitism in November, Harper said he would defend Israel at all times, no matter what the cost. "As long as I am prime minister, whether it is at the United Nations or anywhere else, Canada will take that stand whatever the cost," he said.

Mr. Harper made headlines at the G8 summit in St Petersburg, Russia, in 2006 when he refused to support a resolution calling on Israel to show restraint during what became known as the Lebanon War. Harper at that summit issued his own resolution calling it a 'Canada resolution,' which was strongly supportive of Israel. [Israel Herald]

President Obama has begun a new effort to break the stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by setting out a new starting point for negotiations. A day before the arrival in Washington of Prime



Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, Mr. Obama declared that the prevailing borders before the 1967 Arab-Israeli war — adjusted to some degree to account for Israeli settlements in the West Bank — should be the basis of a deal.

While the 1967 borders have long been viewed as the foundation for a peace agreement, Mr. Obama's formula of land swaps to compensate for disputed territory created a new benchmark for a diplomatic solution.

His statement represented a subtle, but significant shift, in American policy.

The Israeli government immediately protested, saying that for Israel to return to its pre-1967 borders would leave it "indefensible." Mr. Netanyahu held an angry phone conversation with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton before the speech, officials said, in which he demanded that the president's reference to 1967 borders be cut.

Mr. Obama's reference to Israel's borders came toward the end of a somber, 45-minute address that sought to articulate an overarching framework for the disparate American responses to the Arab Spring. "At a time when the people of the Middle East and North Africa are casting off the burdens of the past, the drive for a lasting peace that ends the conflict and resolves all claims is more urgent than ever," he said. Mr. Obama noted that Israel and the Palestinians would have to swap territory

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on either side of that border to account for large Jewish settlements that have taken root in the West Bank since 1967.

The shift moves the United States a step closer to the position of the Palestinians, and is viewed as vital to them because it means the Americans implicitly back their view that new Israeli settlement construction will have to be reversed, or compensated for, in talks over the borders for a new Palestinian state.

Some analysts said Mr. Obama's shift was to lure the Palestinians back to the negotiating table, as a way of heading off their campaign to seek international recognition of a Palestinian state at the United Nations General Assembly in September. Mr. Obama expressed opposition to the Palestinian statehood effort, saying, "Symbolic efforts to isolate Israel at the United Nations in September won't create an independent state."

He also made several other gestures to Mr. Netanyahu, highlighting the security threats to Israel. Mr. Obama's reference to a "non-militarized" Palestinian state is likely to dismay Palestinians, who have long said that such matters should be decided in negotiations. The president also said that the recent unity agreement between the two main Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas, raised "profound and legitimate questions for Israel." "How can one negotiate with a party that has shown itself unwilling to recognize your right to exist?" he said, referring to Hamas, which the United States has designated as a terrorist organization.

Mr. Obama's emphasis on territory and security seemed calculated to segregate the issues on which the United States believes the Israelis and Palestinians can bargain. He said they should leave aside for now more deeply emotional questions like the status of Jerusalem and the fate of Palestinian refugees, which he suggested could be dealt with after border and security issues.

Mr. Obama spoke with palpable frustration that his peacemaking efforts so far had failed. "The international community is tired of an endless process that never produces an outcome," he said. [NY Times]

## Coen Brothers Honored in Israel

Joel and Ethan Coen, a duo that has produced some of this generation's best movies recently landed in Tel Aviv, where they were awarded the Dan David Prize in the Cinema and Society field on behalf of Tel Aviv University.



The million dollar prize is awarded for "achievements having an outstanding scientific, technological, cultural or social impact on our world." Ten percent of the seven figure prize is donated on recipients' behalf to doctorate and post-doctorate student grants. The university praised the brothers' "original and creative partnership, which is unique in the history of filmmaking."

The Coen brothers, who were raised in Minnesota, have deep ties to Israel. Their Jewish mother lived in the British Mandate in Palestine before the State of Israel was created in 1948. Responding to a question about musicians and film makers who boycott the State of Israel because of its policies and actions, screenwriter and director Ethan

Coen said, "People respond to real problems from the heart, and they think that's the right thing to do. We don't agree with that opinion, that that's how to deal with these problems."

The brothers' Jewish heritage is on display in a number of their films, most obviously in 'A Serious Man' – translated into Hebrew as 'The Good Jew'. Despite many references to Jewish cultural themes in their movies, the two deny that their own Jewishness is necessarily connected to their filmmaking. "There were Jewish characters, but in regards to whether our background influences our film making... who knows?" Joel said. "We don't think about it... There's no doubt that our Jewish heritage affects how we see things." "We grew up in a Jewish community, but we never thought to make a story that deals with Israel," Joel continued. "We don't really know Israel - we write American stories. That's what we know."

"We've wanted to come here for a long time, but life got in the way," Joel explained. "We're very happy for this opportunity."

The Coen Brothers were nominated for twelve Academy Awards in the last year alone for their movie 'True Grit'. The film follows a decade of successes that include 'No Country for Old Men', 'A Serious Man', and 'O Brother, Where Art Thou?' [Haaretz.com]