



ISRAEL MATTERS!

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Obama: US In “Lockstep” With Israel On Iran Nukes

Netanyahu: PA Chose Terror Over Peace

The Palestinian Authority has embraced terrorist organizations instead of peace, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said recently. Speaking at a meeting in honor of the Knesset’s 63rd birthday, Netanyahu said that the PA avoids acting to stop extremists, allowing them to incite against Israel in their government-run media and institutions. “We said [the PA] needs to choose between the path of Hamas and the path of peace,” he said. “The Palestinians embraced terrorist organizations that call for Israel’s destruction.”

Netanyahu also discussed the importance of the Knesset in his speech, calling Israel a strong democracy that should serve as an example to its neighbors. He mentioned checks and balances in the government system and calling the judiciary “one of the best in the world, and that is how it will stay.”

Israeli democracy is even stronger than that of the US and Great Britain, which he said limited individual freedoms during wartime. Israel, however, is constantly under threat and never implemented such measures, Netanyahu said.

“Some mistakenly see elections as the face of democracy, but a true democracy is measured in the time between elections, by its freedoms of the individual, and the balance between the branches of government,” Netanyahu stated. “This should not be taken for granted.”

[JPost]

President Barack Obama says the United States is working in “lockstep” with Israel to solve the brewing crisis over Iran’s disputed nuclear program. Obama also said that the United States does not think Israel has decided whether to attack Iran, and that he hopes the standoff can be resolved diplomatically.

Obama’s comments came as Israel’s major allies in the West were working hard to talk it out of a unilateral military strike on Iran’s nuclear facilities, arguing forcefully that an attack ultimately would only strengthen the regime in Tehran. Israel fears Iran is fast approaching a point at which a limited military strike would no longer be enough to head off an Iranian bomb.



“I don’t think that Israel has made a decision on what they need to do,” Obama said during an interview with NBC’s Matt Lauer. He reiterated that the United States has removed no option from consideration in dealing with Iran — an allusion to military intervention — but emphasized that Washington wants a diplomatic solution built around a world coalition.

After years of worries about Iran’s nuclear program, world leaders are now showing real concern that Israel could attack the Islamic republic imminently — a move that might trigger a broader war and disrupt the international economy.

Obama refused to say whether the United States would get notice from Israel before any strike on Iran. “I will say that we have closer military and intelligence consultation between our two countries than we’ve ever had,” Obama said. “We are going to be sure that we work in lockstep as we proceed to try to solve this — hopefully diplomatically.” The United States is leading that initiative, even though Washington largely has concluded that outside argument will have little effect on Israeli decision-making. “Any kind of additional military activity inside the Gulf is disruptive and has a big effect on us,” Obama said. “It could have a big effect on oil prices. We’ve still got troops in Afghanistan, which borders Iran.”

As for the danger of retaliation by Iran against the United States, Obama said, “We don’t see any evidence that they have those intentions or capabilities right now.” Obama said Iran is feeling the pinch of sanctions but Israel is rightfully worried about its security. [AP]

Israeli Archaeologists Find 1,500 Year Old Kosher “Bread Stamp”



A 1,500-year-old seal with the image of the seven-branched Temple Menorah was recently discovered near the city of Acre. The ceramic stamp, which dates from the Byzantine period in the 6th century CE, was found during ongoing Israel Antiquities Authority exca-

vations at Horbat Uza, east of Acre, which are being undertaken before the construction of the Acre-Carmiel railroad track.

It is thought the stamp was used to mark baked goods, and is known as a “bread stamp.” “A number of stamps bearing an image of a menorah are known from different collections. The Temple Menorah, being a Jewish symbol par excellence, indicates the stamps belonged to Jews, unlike Christian bread stamps with the cross pattern which were much more common in the Byzantine period,” said Gilad Jaffe and Dr. Danny Syon, the directors of the excavation, on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

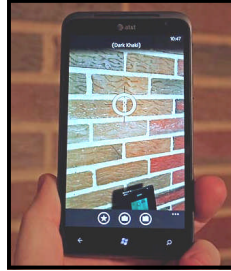
According to the excavation directors, this was the first time that a stamp of this kind has been found in a controlled archaeological excavation, meaning that it is possible to determine where it comes from and when it was made. “The stamp is important because it proves that a Jewish community existed in the settlement of Uza in the Christian-Byzantine period. The presence of a Jewish settlement so close to Acre - a region that was definitely Christian at this time - constitutes an innovation in archaeological research,” Syon said. “Due to the geographical proximity of Horbat Uza to Acre, we can speculate that the settlement supplied kosher baked goods to the Jews of Acre in the Byzantine period,” Jaffe and Syon added.

Horbat Uza is a small rural settlement where other archaeological finds, a Shabbat lamp and jars with menorah patterns painted on them, have alluded to it having been a Jewish settlement.

The stamp bears the image of a seven-branched menorah, and the handle of the stamp is engraved with Greek letters. According to Dr. Leah Di Segni of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, this is probably the name Launtius, which was common among Jews of the period and has appeared on other Jewish bread stamps.

“This is probably the name of the baker from Horbat Uza,” Jaffe and Syon said. [Haaretz]

Israeli Mobile App Acts as Eyes for Color Blind



Colorful, a new Windows phone application, can act as eyes for the color blind. The app enables users to distinguish colors with the use their phone’s camera – by using filters to change the color schemes and to fit the user’s color vision deficiency.

If pointed towards a bunch of apples, the app can tell whether they are red, yellow, or green apples.

The app was created by three Israeli students in computer science from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem – Edan Bloch, Maayan Negbi, and Achia Shaag. Bloch decided to work on the app when he found out that color blindness is more prevalent than he imagined; between four to 10 percent of the population, mostly men, are affected. The Colorful prototype won Microsoft’s WPAppItUp international student competition. [JPost]

Halftime in Israel: Madonna to Launch World Tour in Tel Aviv



Say what you want about Madonna, but numbers don’t lie. The pop legend’s Super Bowl performance was the most watched of all time, with 114 million people tuning in.

The next time she sings “Like a Virgin,” it will be to a maximum crowd of 8

million - assuming everyone in Israel attends her show in Tel Aviv. The 53-year old star begins her first tour since 2009, on May 29th.

Madonna’s 2012 tour will include 90 shows, her most extensive yet. The tour is going to promote her new album, “MDNA” which releases on March 26th. Tickets for the Tel Aviv show will go on sale February 10th. In addition to Israel, her tour will take her to 26 European markets, and a series of 26 shows across North America, including a September 6th show at Yankee Stadium.

There’s symmetry with this tour. Madonna’s last tour, “Sticky & Sweet” wrapped up in Tel Aviv, where her upcoming tour is soon to begin.

Israel has a special place in Madonna’s heart, as she has long embraced Jewish mysticism, Kaballah. [isRealli - The New Blog of the State of Israel]