



ISRAEL MATTERS!

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Netanyahu Draws "Red Line" on Iran's Nuclear Program During U.N. Speech

ADL Quits Interfaith Dialogue Following Churches' Letter on Aid to Israel

The Anti-Defamation League withdrew from a national Jewish-Christian interfaith dialogue after church leaders asked Congress to reevaluate U.S. military aid to Israel. The ADL called the request "a serious breach of trust by mainline Protestant Church leaders" participating in the annual interfaith meeting.

The Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist, United Church of Christ churches, and National Council of Churches, among others, sent a letter to members of Congress on Oct. 8 calling for an investigation into possible violations by Israel of the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act and the U.S. Arms Export Control Act that would make Israel ineligible for U.S. military aid. The letter decried "a troubling and consistent pattern of disregard by the government of Israel for U.S. policies that support a just and lasting peace," citing Israel's failure to halt settlement activity despite U.S. government requests.

"In light of the failure of any of the church leaders to reach out to us, we have decided not to attend this interfaith meeting," said Abraham Foxman, ADL's national director. "The blatant lack of sensitivity by the Protestant dialogue partners we had been planning to meet with has seriously damaged the foundation for mutual respect." "In its clear bias against Israel, it is striking that their letter once again places the blame entirely on Israel," Foxman added. [JTA]



Holding up a cartoon-like drawing of a bomb with a fuse, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu literally drew a red line just below a label reading "final stage" to a bomb, in which Iran was 90 percent along the path of having sufficient weapons-grade material. Experts put that at the point that Iran has amassed enough uranium, purified to a level of 20 percent, that could quickly be enriched further and be used to produce an atomic bomb.

Netanyahu told the United Nations General Assembly he believes that faced with a clear red line, Iran will back down in a crisis that has sent jitters across the region and in financial markets. "And this will give more time for sanctions and diplomacy to convince Iran to dismantle its nuclear weapons program altogether," he added. Netanyahu's remarks were the closest he or any top Israeli official has come to publicly laying out precisely which Iranian actions could trigger an Israeli military strike on Tehran's nuclear infrastructure.

By referring to spring or summer 2013 for Iran to complete the next stage of uranium enrichment, the Israeli leader also seemed to dispel fears that Israel might strike Iran before the U.S. presidential election.

Netanyahu's remarks also seemed to deliver a two-part message to the Obama White House - along with Iran's leaders, his most important audience - signaling that the hawkish prime minister wanted an end to the all-too-public war of words with Washington over Iran's suspected nuclear ambitions. But they also showed that he was not backing down an inch on his insistence that much harsher warnings must be delivered to Tehran.

In his speech, Netanyahu never explicitly said that if Iran crossed his red line, Israel would attack the Iranian nuclear facilities, but he did seem to imply such a threat. "At this late hour, there is only one way to peacefully prevent Iran from getting atomic bombs. That's by placing a clear red line on Iran's nuclear program," Netanyahu said.

Iran, Netanyahu said, was well into what he defined as the second stage of enrichment - 20 percent purification - and predicted it would complete it by "next spring, at most by next summer, at current enrichment rates."

Netanyahu has faced opposition within his cabinet and from former Israeli security chiefs to any go-it-alone attack on Iran. Opinion polls show that Israelis are wary of any such strike by their military. [Reuters]

Israel: No Changes to Egyptian Peace Treaty

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman has said that Israel would not agree to reevaluate its peace treaty with Egypt, days after an attack along the shared border killed an Israeli soldier and three gunmen.



In a bid to restore security to the increasingly lawless Sinai Peninsula, Israel and Egypt have agreed to temporarily waive limits on troops that was included in the 1979 peace deal.

In so doing, Egypt will be allowed to send heavy weaponry into the vast desert region which borders Israel. There have been calls in Egypt for more permanent adjustments to the peace accords, a cornerstone of regional stability.

“There is no chance that Israel will agree to any kind of change to the peace deal,” Lieberman said. “The Egyptians shouldn’t try to delude themselves or delude others and they should not rely on this demand,” he said.

Israel welcomed a sweeping crackdown by Egypt, which deployed armored personnel carriers and attack helicopters to root out militants in the Sinai peninsula this summer, but it balked once Egypt sent in tanks, some of which were removed after Israel complained.

While the tanks were not aimed at Israel and it does not consider them a strategic threat, Israeli officials said they were concerned about the precedent and that the move should have been coordinated. Egypt claims that it has coordinated the security sweep with Israel.

Since the fall of longtime Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak in 2011, tensions between Israel and Egypt have grown, particularly since this summer’s election of Mohammed Morsi as president. Morsi, an Islamist of the Muslim Brotherhood, has been cooler to Israel than his predecessor and concerns have risen there over the fate of the peace deal. While it has said it would abide by the peace agreement, the Muslim Brotherhood has called for a revision to the pact. Many Egyptians contend the troop limits infringe on national sovereignty.

Lieberman said the number of troops wasn’t relevant, suggesting the Egyptian military was not prepared to tackle the insecurity. “The problem in Sinai is not the size of the forces, it is their readiness to fight, to put pressure and to carry out the job as is needed,” he said.

Speaking on Army Radio, Defense Ministry official Amos Gilad also highlighted the importance of protecting the peace agreement but did not discuss Israel’s willingness to make changes to it. He said any change would have to be agreed to by both parties.

[Associated Press]

Israeli Brain Stimulator Helps Smokers Quit

Stimulating the brain using magnetic currents can significantly reduce the urge smokers have to light up, Israeli researchers discovered. During the study, a special helmet-like device was developed for deep stimulation of specific parts of the brain. The device sends magnetic currents to the brain that stimulate the nervous system while the patients are entirely conscious.

The study was led by Prof. Abraham Zangen, head of the Brain and Behavior Laboratory at the Department of Human Sciences at Ben Gurion University, along with Dr. Limor Dinur Klein from Tel Aviv University, and Prof. Moshe Kotler, head of the Psychiatric Union in Israel.

The participants in the study all smoked at least 20 cigarettes a day and all had attempted to quit smoking using other methods. They were invited for 13 sessions of 15 minutes each, over a period of three weeks.

Prof. Zangen said, “This is just the interim analysis but it is promising. Forty percent of the subjects in this subgroup quit smoking.” According to Zangen, the combination of stimulation at high frequency and cue presentation – providing a signal that reminds the person of something to provoke the craving circuitry in the brain – causes a significant reduction in cigarette consumption.

Zangen said the research is a breakthrough that can affect other fields, too. The study shows that multiple sessions of electromagnetic stimulation of the brain can make long-term changes in neural networks that mediate pathological behavior. Moreover, it shows that psychological activation of the relevant circuitry in the brain combined with the physical electromagnetic stimulation provides improved results. [NoCamels]

Egypt and Jordan Name New Envoys to Israel

Both envoys, Walid Abidat, a Jordanian career diplomat, and Egypt’s Ataf Salam, are expected to present their credentials to the Israeli president.

The new Jordanian ambassador was appointed to the post, which had been vacant for two years, after Cairo named a replacement for outgoing ambassador Yasser Rada whose stint ended in July. Salam has already worked in Israel as Egyptian consul, in the southern city of Eilat.

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman welcomed the two appointments. But, referring to the often hostile rhetoric of Egyptian and Jordanian rulers, he called for more work to fill the peace treaties Israel signed with the two Arab states with more positive content and less acrimony. [DEBKFiles]