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ISRAEL

C. ISRAELI PM BENJAMIN NETANYAHU, ADDRESS TO THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE OCCASION OF PALESTINE'S APPLICATION FOR UN MEMBERSHIP, NEW YORK, 23 SEPTEMBER 2011 (EXCERPTS).

Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech, which followed Palestinian pres. Mahmud Abbas's, was sharply critical of the United Nations, and emphasized Israel's unflagging efforts to reach a just peace in the face of multifold threats, the most recent and gravest being Islamist fanaticism. Though reiterating his often-expressed hope that the Palestinians will become a partner in peace and finally recognize Israel as a Jewish state, the speech was vague on specific reasons (beyond Palestinian intransigence) for the stalled negotiations. When Netanyahu took the podium following a standing ovation for Abbas, a number of delegates left the assembly hall, prompting him to state: "I did not come here to win applause. I came here to speak the truth." The speech was taken from the Israeli Prime Minister's Office website at www.pmo.gov.il.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Ladies and gentlemen, Israel has extended its hand in peace from the moment it was established 63 years ago. On behalf of Israel and the Jewish people, I extend that hand again today . . . most especially, I extend my hand to the Palestinian people, with whom we seek a just and lasting peace. (Applause.)

Ladies and gentlemen, in Israel our hope for peace never wanes. Our scientists, doctors, innovators, apply their genius to improve the world of tomorrow. Our artists, our writers, enrich the heritage of humanity. Now, I know that this is not exactly the image of Israel that is often portrayed in this hall. After all, it was here in 1975 that the age-old yearning of my people to restore our national life in our ancient biblical homeland—it was then that this was braided—branded, rather—shamefully, as racism. And it was here in 1980, right here, that the historic peace agreement between Israel and Egypt wasn't praised; it was denounced! And it's here year after year that Israel is unjustly singled out for condemnation. It's singled out for condemnation more often than all the nations of the world combined. Twenty-one out of the 27 General Assembly resolutions condemn Israel—the one true democracy in the Middle East.

...

So here in the U.N., automatic majorities can decide anything. They can decide that the sun sets in the west or rises in the west. I think the first has already been preordained. But they can also decide—they have decided that the Western Wall in Jerusalem, Judaism's holiest place, is occupied Palestinian territory.

And yet even here in the General Assembly, the truth can sometimes break through. In 1984 when I was appointed Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, I visited the great rabbi of Lubavich. He said to me—and ladies and gentlemen, I don't want any of you to be offended because from personal experience of serving here, I know there are many honorable men and women, many capable and decent people serving their nations here. But here's what the rebbe said to me. He said to me, you'll be serving in a house of many lies. And then he said, remember that even in the darkest place, the light of a single candle can be seen far and wide.

Today I hope that the light of truth will shine, if only for a few minutes, in a hall that for too long has been a place of darkness for my country. So as Israel's prime minister, I didn't come here

to win applause. I came here to speak the truth. (Cheers, applause.) The truth is—the truth is that Israel wants peace. The truth is that I want peace. The truth is that in the Middle East at all times, but especially during these turbulent days, peace must be anchored in security. The truth is that we cannot achieve peace through UN resolutions, but only through direct negotiations between the parties. The truth is that so far the Palestinians have refused to negotiate. The truth is that Israel wants peace with a Palestinian state, but the Palestinians want a state without peace. And the truth is you shouldn't let that happen.

Ladies and gentlemen, when I first came here 27 years ago, the world was divided between East and West. Since then the Cold War ended, great civilizations have risen from centuries of slumber, hundreds of millions have been lifted out of poverty, countless more are poised to follow, and the remarkable thing is that so far this monumental historic shift has largely occurred peacefully. Yet a malignancy is now growing between East and West that threatens the peace of all. It seeks not to liberate, but to enslave, not to build, but to destroy.

That malignancy is militant Islam. It cloaks itself in the mantle of a great faith, yet it murders Jews, Christians and Muslims alike with unforgiving impartiality. On September 11th it killed thousands of Americans, and it left the twin towers in smoldering ruins. Last night I laid a wreath on the 9/11 memorial. It was deeply moving. But as I was going there, one thing echoed in my mind: the outrageous words of the president of Iran on this podium yesterday. He implied that 9/11 was an American conspiracy. Some of you left this hall. All of you should have. (Applause.)

Since 9/11, militant Islamists slaughtered countless other innocents—in London and Madrid, in Baghdad and Mumbai, in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, in every part of Israel. I believe that the greatest danger facing our world is that this fanaticism will arm itself with nuclear weapons. And this is precisely what Iran is trying to do.

Can you imagine that man who ranted here yesterday—can you imagine him armed with nuclear weapons?

The international community must stop Iran before it's too late. If Iran is not stopped, we will all face the specter of nuclear terrorism, and the Arab Spring could soon become an Iranian winter. That would be a tragedy. Millions of Arabs have taken to the streets to replace tyranny with liberty, and no one would benefit more than Israel if those committed to freedom and peace would prevail.

...

Now, some argue that the spread of militant Islam, especially in these turbulent times—if you want to slow it down, they argue, Israel must hurry to make concessions, to make territorial compromises. And this theory sounds simple. Basically it goes like this: Leave the territory, and peace will be advanced. The moderates will be strengthened, the radicals will be kept at bay. And don't worry about the pesky details of how Israel will actually defend itself; international troops will do the job.

These people say to me constantly: Just make a sweeping offer, and everything will work out. You know, there's only one problem with that theory. We've tried it and it hasn't worked. In 2000 Israel made a sweeping peace offer that met virtually all of the Palestinian demands. Arafat rejected it. The Palestinians then launched a terror attack that claimed a thousand Israeli lives. Prime Minister Olmert afterwards made an even more sweeping offer, in 2008. President Abbas didn't even respond to it.

But Israel did more than just make sweeping offers. We actually left territory. We withdrew from Lebanon in 2000 and from every square inch of Gaza in 2005.

...

But ladies and gentlemen, we didn't get peace. We got war. We got Iran, which through its proxy Hamas promptly kicked out the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian Authority collapsed in a day—in one day.

President Abbas just said on this podium that the Palestinians are armed only with their hopes and dreams. Yeah, hopes, dreams, and 10,000

missiles and Grad rockets supplied by Iran, not to mention the river of lethal weapons now flowing into Gaza from the Sinai, from Libya, and from elsewhere.

Thousands of missiles have already rained down on our cities. So you might understand that, given all this, Israelis rightly ask: What's to prevent this from happening again in the West Bank? See, most of our major cities in the south of the country are within a few dozen kilometers from Gaza. But in the center of the country, opposite the West Bank, our cities are a few hundred meters or at most a few kilometers away from the edge of the West Bank.

So I want to ask you. Would any of you—would any of you bring danger so close to your cities, to your families? Would you act so recklessly with the lives of your citizens? Israel is prepared to have a Palestinian state in the West Bank, but we're not prepared to have another Gaza there. And that's why we need to have real security arrangements, which the Palestinians simply refuse to negotiate with us.

Israelis remember the bitter lessons of Gaza. Many of Israel's critics ignore them. They irresponsibly advise Israel to go down this same perilous path again. You read what these people say and it's as if nothing happened—just repeating the same advice, the same formulas as though none of this happened.

And these critics continue to press Israel to make far-reaching concessions without first assuring Israel's security. They praise those who unwittingly feed the insatiable crocodile of militant Islam as bold statesmen. They cast as enemies of peace those of us who insist that we must first erect a sturdy barrier to keep the crocodile out, or at the very least jam an iron bar between its gaping jaws.

So in the face of the labels and the libels, Israel must heed better advice. Better a bad press than a good eulogy, and better still would be a fair press whose sense of history extends beyond breakfast, and which recognizes Israel's legitimate security concerns.

I believe that in serious peace negotiations, these needs and concerns can be properly addressed, but they will not be addressed without negotiations. And the needs are many, because Israel is

such a tiny country. Without Judea and Samaria, the West Bank, Israel is all of 9 miles wide.

...

So how do you—how do you protect such a tiny country, surrounded by people sworn to its destruction and armed to the teeth by Iran? . . . And to defend itself, Israel must therefore maintain a long-term Israeli military presence in critical strategic areas in the West Bank.

I explained this to President Abbas. He answered that if a Palestinian state was to be a sovereign country, it could never accept such arrangements. Why not? America has had troops in Japan, Germany and South Korea for more than a half a century. Britain has had an airbase in Cyprus or rather an air base in Cyprus. France has forces in three independent African nations. None of these states claim that they're not sovereign countries.

...

Ladies and gentlemen, last year in Israel in Bar-Ilan University, this year in the Knesset and in the U.S. Congress, I laid out my vision for peace in which a demilitarized Palestinian state recognizes the Jewish state. Yes, the Jewish state. After all, this is the body that recognized the Jewish state 64 years ago. Now, don't you think it's about time that Palestinians did the same?

...

Ladies and gentlemen, I continue to hope that President Abbas will be my partner in peace. I've worked hard to advance that peace. The day I came into office, I called for direct negotiations without preconditions. President Abbas didn't respond. I outlined a vision of peace of two states for two peoples. He still didn't respond. I removed hundreds of roadblocks and checkpoints, to ease freedom of movement in the Palestinian areas; this facilitated a fantastic growth in the Palestinian economy. But again—no response. I took the unprecedented step of freezing new buildings in the settlements for 10 months.

No prime minister did that before, ever. (Scattered applause.) Once again—you applaud, but there was no response. No response.

...

There's an old Arab saying that you cannot applaud with one hand. Well, the same is true of peace. I cannot make peace alone. I cannot make peace without you. President Abbas, I extend my hand—the hand of Israel—in peace. I hope that you will grasp that hand. We are both the sons of Abraham. My people call him Avraham. Your people call him Ibrahim. We share the same patriarch. We dwell in the same land. Our destinies are intertwined. Let us realize the vision of Isaiah (speaks in Hebrew): "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light." Let that light be the light of peace.