

PM Netanyahu's Speech at AIPAC Policy Conference 2012

(3 March 2012)

<http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Communication/PMSpeaks/speechAIPAC060312.htm>

Thank you. Todah rabah.

Thank you very much.

Sara and I want to thank you for that wonderful reception. This applause that could be heard as far away as Jerusalem . Jerusalem – the eternal and united capital of Israel.

Thank you Howard, Rosy, Michael, and thank you all the leadership of AIPAC. Thank you for everything that you do.

I know that more than a half of the members of Congress are in attendance here tonight. I deeply appreciate your being here.

Michael, you said that when I spoke last May, in Congress, you – the members of congress – stood up to applaud the State of Israel.

Now I ask for another applause. Now I ask the 13,000 supporters of Israel who are here tonight to stand up and applaud you for standing up for Israel. Democrats and Republicans alike, I salute your unwavering support to the Jewish state

I want to send a special message to a great friend of Israel who is not here tonight: Senator Mark Kirk, the co-author of the Kirk-Menendez Iran Sanctions Act.

Senator Kirk, I know you're watching this tonight. Please get well soon. America needs you; Israel needs you.

I send you wishes for a speedy recovery. So get well and get back to work.

I also want to recognize Yossi Peled, who is here tonight. Yossi, would you please stand up.

Yossi was born in Belgium. His parents hid him with a Christian family during the Holocaust, World War II. His father and many other members of his family were murdered at Auschwitz.

His mother survived the Holocaust, returned to reclaim Yossi, and brought him to Israel. He became one of Israel's bravest and greatest generals. And today, he serves as a minister in my cabinet.

Yossi's life is the story of the Jewish people – the story of a powerless and stateless people who became a strong and proud nation, able to defend itself.

And ladies and gentlemen, Israel must always reserve the right to defend itself.

I want to recognize Israel's Ambassador to the United States, Michael Oren. Michael, you're doing an outstanding job. Thank you for all you do for our country. And thank you for everything you are doing for the friendship between Israel and the United States.

I also want to recognize Ambassador Dan Shapiro, the United States' Ambassador to Israel. President Obama is right, your Hebrew is improving, though it is not on par with Michael Oren's. Dan, we appreciate your efforts to strengthen the alliance between America and Israel.

Are there any students here tonight?

Is there anyone here from Florida?

from New York?

from Wisconsin? -- that's important. I'll tell you about it later

from California?

You're the future, and thank you all for ensuring the future of the great alliance between Israel and the United States.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Tonight, I'd like to talk to you about a subject that no one has been talking about recently...: Iran.

Every day, I open the newspapers and read about these redlines and these timelines. I read about what Israel has supposedly decided to do, or what Israel might do.

Well, I'm not going to talk to you about what Israel will do or will not do, I never talk about that. But I do want to talk to you about the dangers of a nuclear-armed Iran. I want to explain why Iran must never be allowed to develop nuclear weapons.

President Obama has reiterated his commitment to prevent that from happening. He stated clearly that all options are on the table, and that American policy is not containment.

Well, Israel has exactly the same policy -- We are determined to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons; we leave all options on the table; and containment is definitely not an option.

The Jewish state will not allow those who seek our destruction to possess the means to achieve that goal.

A nuclear armed Iran must be stopped.

Amazingly, some people refuse to acknowledge that Iran's goal is to develop nuclear weapons. You see, Iran claims to do everything it's doing, that it's enriching uranium to develop medical isotopes.

Yeah, that's right.

A country that builds underground nuclear facilities, develops intercontinental ballistic missiles, manufactures thousands of centrifuges, and that absorbs crippling sanctions, is doing all that in order to advance...medical research.

So you see, when that Iranian ICBM is flying through the air to a location near you, you've got nothing to worry about. It's only carrying medical isotopes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then what is it?

That's right, it's a duck. But this duck is a nuclear duck. And it's time the world started calling a duck a duck.

Fortunately, President Obama and most world leaders understand that the claim that Iran's goal is not to develop nuclear weapons is simply ridiculous.

Yet incredibly, some are prepared to accept an idea only slightly less preposterous: that we should accept a world in which the Ayatollahs have atomic bombs.

Sure, they say, Iran is cruel, but it's not crazy. It's detestable but it's deterrable.

My friends,

Responsible leaders should not bet the security of their countries on the belief that the world's most dangerous regimes won't use the world's most dangerous weapons.

And I promise you that as Prime Minister, I will never gamble with the security of the State of Israel.

From the beginning, the Ayatollah regime has broken every international rule and flouted every norm. It has seized embassies, targeted diplomats. It sends its own children through mine fields; it hangs gays and stones women; it supports Assad's brutal slaughter of the Syrian people; it is the world's foremost sponsor of terrorism: it sponsors Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza and terrorists throughout the Middle East, Africa, even South America.

Iran's proxies have dispatched hundreds of suicide bombers, planted thousands of roadside bombs, and they fired over twenty thousand missiles at civilians.

Through terror from the skies and terror on the ground, Iran is responsible for the murder of hundreds, if not thousands, of Americans.

In 1983, Iran's proxy Hezbollah blew up the Marine barracks in Lebanon, killing 240 US Marines. In the last decade, it's been responsible for murdering and maiming American soldiers in Afghanistan and in Iraq.

Just a few months ago, it tried to assassinate the Saudi Ambassador to the United States in a restaurant just a few blocks from here. The assassins didn't care that several Senators and Congressmen would have been murdered in the process.

Now this is real chutzpa: Iran accuses the American government of orchestrating 9/11, and that's as brazen as denying the Holocaust, and they do...

Iran calls for Israel's destruction, and they work for its destruction – each day, every day, relentlessly.

I say all this to make one point clear -- This is how Iran behaves today, without nuclear weapons. Think of how they will behave tomorrow, with nuclear weapons. Iran will be even more reckless and a lot more dangerous.

There's been plenty of talk recently about the costs of stopping Iran. I think it's time we started talking about the costs of not stopping Iran.

A nuclear-armed Iran would dramatically increase terrorism by giving terrorists a nuclear umbrella. Let me try to explain what that means, a nuclear umbrella.

It means that Iran's terror proxies like Hezbollah, Hamas will be emboldened to attack the United States, Israel, and other countries because they will be backed by a power that has atomic bombs. So the terrorism could grow tenfold.

A nuclear-armed Iran could choke off the world's oil supply and could make real its threat to close the Straits of Hormouz.

If you're worried about the price of oil today, imagine how high oil prices could get once a nuclear-armed Iran starts blackmailing the world.

If Iran gets nuclear weapons, it would set off a mad dash by Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and others to acquire nuclear weapons of their own. The world's most volatile region would become a nuclear tinderbox waiting to go off. And here's the worst nightmare of all, with nuclear weapons, Iran could threaten all of us with nuclear terrorism.

It could put a nuclear device in a ship heading to any port or in a truck parked in any city, anywhere in the world.

I want you to think about what it would mean to have nuclear weapons in the hands of those who lead millions of radicals who chant of "Death to America" and "Death to Israel."

When you think about that you'll reach a simple conclusion: for the sake of our prosperity, for the sake of our security, for the sake of our children, Iran must not be allowed to acquire nuclear weapons!

Of course, the best outcome would be if Iran decided to abandon its nuclear weapons program peacefully. No one would be happier than me and the people of Israel if Iran dismantled its program.

But so far, that hasn't happened. For fifteen years, I've been warning that a nuclear-armed Iran is a grave danger to my country and to the peace and security of the entire world.

For the last decade, the international community has tried diplomacy. It hasn't worked.

For six years, the international community has applied sanctions. That hasn't worked either.

I appreciate President Obama's recent efforts to impose even tougher sanctions against Iran. These sanctions are hurting Iran's economy, but unfortunately, Iran's nuclear program continues to march forward.

Israel has waited patiently for the international community to resolve this issue. We've waited for diplomacy to work. We've waited for sanctions to work. None of us can afford to wait much longer.

As Prime Minister of Israel, I will never let my people live in the shadow of annihilation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Some commentators would have you believe that stopping Iran from getting the bomb is more dangerous than letting Iran have the bomb. They say that a military confrontation with Iran would undermine the efforts already underway; that it would be ineffective; and that it would provoke an even more vindictive response by Iran.

I've heard these arguments before. In fact, I've read them before -- In my desk, I have copies of an exchange of letters between the World Jewish Congress and the United States War Department.

Here are the letters:

The year was 1944. The World Jewish Congress implored the American government to bomb Auschwitz. The reply came five days later. I want to read it to you.

"Such an operation could be executed only by diverting considerable air support essential to the success of our forces elsewhere...

and in any case, it would be of such doubtful efficacy that it would not warrant the use of our resources..."

And, my friends, here's the most remarkable sentence of all, and I quote:

"Such an effort might provoke even more vindictive action by the Germans."

Think about that – "even more vindictive action" -- than the Holocaust.

My Friends,

2012 is not 1944. The American government today is different. You heard it in President Obama's speech yesterday.

But here's my point:

The Jewish people are also different. Today we have a state of our own. And the purpose of the Jewish state is to defend Jewish lives and to secure the Jewish future.

Never again will we not be masters of the fate of our very survival. Never again.

That is why Israel must always have the ability to defend itself, by itself, against any threat.

My Friends,

We deeply appreciate the great alliance between our two countries. But when it comes to Israel's survival, we must always remain the masters of our fate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Israel's fate is to continue to be the forward position of freedom in the Middle East. The only place in the Middle East where minorities enjoy full civil rights; the only place in the Middle East where Arabs enjoy full civil rights; the only place in the Middle East where Christians are free to practice their faith; the only place in the Middle East where real judges protect the rule of law.

And as Prime Minister of Israel, I will always protect Israel's democracy – always. I will never allow anything to threaten Israel's democratic way of life. and most especially, I will never tolerate any discrimination against women.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This week, we will read how one woman changed Jewish history.

In Synagogues throughout the world, the Jewish people will celebrate the festival of Purim. We will read how some 2,500 years ago, a Persian anti-Semite tried to annihilate the Jewish people.

And we will read how that plot was foiled by one courageous woman – Esther.

In every generation, there are those who wish to destroy the Jewish people.

In this generation, we are blessed to live in an age when there is a Jewish state capable of defending the Jewish people.