

PM Netanyahu's Speech at the United Nations General Assembly (1 October 2015)

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Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressing the United Nation General Assembly, October 1, 2015. Photo: Getty Images.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I bring you greetings from Jerusalem, the city in which the Jewish People's hopes and prayers for peace for all of humanity have echoed throughout the ages. Thirty-one years ago, as Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations, I stood at this podium for the first time. I spoke that day against a resolution sponsored by Iran to expel Israel from the United Nations. Then as now, the UN was obsessively hostile towards Israel, the one true democracy in the Middle East. Then as now, some sought to deny the one and only Jewish state a place among the nations. I ended that first speech by saying, "Gentlemen, check your fanaticism at the door." More than three decades later, as the Prime Minister of Israel, I am again privileged to speak from this podium. And for me, that privilege has always come with a moral responsibility to speak the truth. So after three days of listening to world leaders praise the nuclear deal with Iran, I begin my speech today by saying: Ladies and Gentlemen, check your enthusiasm at the door. You see, this deal doesn't make peace more likely.

By fueling Iran's aggressions with billions of dollars in sanctions relief, it makes war more likely. Just look at what Iran has done in the last six months alone, since the framework agreement was announced in Lausanne. Iran boosted its supply of devastating weapons to Syria. Iran sent more soldiers of its Revolutionary Guard into Syria. Iran sent thousands of Afghani and Pakistani

Shi'ite fighters to Syria. Iran did all this to prop up Assad's brutal regime. Iran also shipped tons of weapons and ammunitions to the Houthi rebels in Yemen, including another shipment just two days ago. Iran threatened to topple Jordan. Iran's proxy Hezbollah smuggled into Lebanon SA-22 missiles to down our planes, and Yakhont cruise missiles to sink our ships. Iran supplied Hezbollah with precision-guided surface-to-surface missiles and attack drones so it can accurately hit any target in Israel. Iran aided Hamas and Islamic Jihad in building armed drones in Gaza.

Iran also made clear its plans to open two new terror fronts against Israel, promising to arm Palestinians in the West Bank and sending its Revolutionary Guard generals to the Golan Heights, from which its operatives recently fired rockets on northern Israel. Israel will continue to respond forcefully to any attacks against it from Syria. Israel will continue to act to prevent the transfer of strategic weapons to Hezbollah from and through Syrian territory.

Every few weeks, Iran and Hezbollah set up new terror cells in cities throughout the world. Three such cells were recently uncovered in Kuwait, Jordan and Cyprus. In May, security forces in Cyprus raided a Hezbollah agent's apartment in the city of Larnaca. There they found five tons of ammonium nitrate, that's roughly the same amount of ammonium nitrate that was used to blow up the federal building in Oklahoma City. And that's just in one apartment, in one city, in one country. But Iran is setting up dozens of terror cells like this around the world, ladies and gentlemen, they're setting up those terror cells in this hemisphere too. I repeat: Iran's been doing all of this, everything that I've just described, just in the last six months, when it was trying to convince the world to remove the sanctions. Now just imagine what Iran will do after those sanctions are lifted.

Unleashed and un-muzzled, Iran will go on the prowl, devouring more and more prey. In the wake of the nuclear deal, Iran is spending billions of dollars on weapons and satellites. You think Iran is doing that to advance peace? You think hundreds of billions of dollars in sanctions relief and fat contracts will turn this rapacious tiger into a kitten? If you do, you should think again.

In 2013 President Rouhani began his so-called charm offensive here at the UN. Two years later, Iran is executing more political prisoners, escalating its regional aggression, and rapidly expanding its global terror network. You know, they say actions speak louder than words. But in Iran's case, the words speak as loud as the actions. Just listen to the Deputy Commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Quds Force. Here's what he said in February. "The Islamic revolution is not limited by geographic borders...." He boasted that Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Yemen are among the countries being "conquered by the Islamic Republic of Iran." Conquered. And for those of you who believe that the deal in Vienna will bring a change in Iran's policy, just listen to what Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei said five days after the nuclear deal was reached: "Our policies towards the arrogant government of the United States will not change." The United States, he vowed, will continue to be Iran's enemy.

While giving the mullahs more money is likely to fuel more repression inside Iran, it will definitely fuel more aggression outside Iran. As the leader of a country defending itself every day

against Iran's growing aggression, I wish I could take comfort in the claim that this deal blocks Iran's path to nuclear weapons. But I can't, because it doesn't. This deal does place several constraints on Iran's nuclear program. And rightly so, because the international community recognizes that Iran is so dangerous. But you see here's the catch. Under this deal, if Iran doesn't change its behavior, in fact, if it becomes even more dangerous in the years to come, the most important constraints will still be automatically lifted by year 10 and by year 15. That would place a militant Islamic terror regime weeks away from having the fissile material for an entire arsenal of nuclear bombs. That just doesn't make any sense. I've said that if Iran wants to be treated like a normal country, let it act like a normal country. But this deal, this deal will treat Iran like a normal country even if it remains a dark theocracy that conquers its neighbors, sponsors terrorism worldwide and chants "Death to Israel", "Death to America." Does anyone seriously believe that flooding a radical theocracy with weapons and cash will curb its appetite for aggression? Do any of you really believe that a theocratic Iran with sharper claws and sharper fangs will be more likely to change its stripes? So here's a general rule that I've learned and you must have learned in your life time: when bad behavior is rewarded, it only gets worse.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have long said that the greatest danger facing our world is the coupling of militant Islam with nuclear weapons. And I'm gravely concerned that the nuclear deal with Iran will prove to be the marriage certificate of that unholy union.

I know that some well-intentioned people sincerely believe that this deal is the best way to block Iran's path to the bomb. But one of history's most important yet least learned lessons is this: the best intentions don't prevent the worst outcomes. The vast majority of Israelis believe that this nuclear deal with Iran is a very bad deal. And what makes matters even worse is that we see a world celebrating this bad deal, rushing to embrace and do business with a regime openly committed to our destruction. Last week, Major General Salehi, the commander of Iran's army, proclaimed this, "We will annihilate Israel for sure. We are glad that we are in the forefront of executing the Supreme Leader's order to destroy Israel." And as for the Supreme Leader himself, a few days after the nuclear deal was announced, he released his latest book. Here it is. It's a 400-page screed detailing his plan to destroy the State of Israel. Last month, Khamenei once again made his genocidal intentions clear before Iran's top clerical body, the Assembly of Experts. He spoke about Israel, home to over six million Jews. He pledged, "There will be no Israel in 25 years." Seventy years after the murder of six million Jews, Iran's rulers promise to destroy my country. Murder my people. And the response from this body, the response from nearly every one of the governments represented here has been absolutely nothing! Utter silence! Deafening silence.

Perhaps you can now understand why Israel is not joining you in celebrating this deal. If Iran's rulers were working to destroy your countries, perhaps you'd be less enthusiastic about the deal. If Iran's terror proxies were firing thousands of rockets at your cities, perhaps you'd be more measured in your praise. And if this deal were unleashing a nuclear arms race in your

neighborhood, perhaps you'd be more reluctant to celebrate. But don't think that Iran is only a danger to Israel. Besides Iran's aggression in the Middle East and its terror around the world, Iran is also building intercontinental ballistic missiles whose sole purpose is to carry nuclear warheads. Now remember this: Iran already has missiles that can reach Israel. So those intercontinental ballistic missiles that Iran is building, they're not meant for us. They're meant for you, for Europe, for America, for raining down mass destruction anytime, anywhere.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it's not easy to oppose something that is embraced by the greatest powers in the world. Believe me; it would be far easier to remain silent. But throughout our history, the Jewish people have learned the heavy price of silence. And as the Prime Minister of the Jewish State, as someone who knows that history, I refuse to be silent. I'll say it again. The days when the Jewish people remained passive in the face of genocidal enemies, those days are over. Not being passive means speaking up about those dangers. We have. We are. We will. Not being passive also means defending ourselves against those dangers. We have. We are. And we will. Israel will not allow Iran to break-into, to sneak into, or to walk into the nuclear weapons club. I know that preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons remains the official policy of the international community. But no one should question Israel's determination to defend itself against those who seek our destruction.

For in every generation, there were those who rose up to destroy our people. In antiquity, we faced destruction from the ancient empires of Babylon and Rome. In the Middle Ages, we faced inquisition and expulsion. And in modern times, we faced pogroms and the Holocaust. Yet the Jewish people persevered. And now another regime has arisen, swearing to destroy Israel. That regime would be wise to consider this: I stand here today representing Israel, a country 67 years young, but the nation-state of a people nearly 4,000 years old. Yet the empires of Babylon and Rome are not represented in this hall of nations. Neither is the Thousand Year Reich. Those seemingly invincible empires are long gone. But Israel lives. The people of Israel live. Am Yisrael Chai. The re-birth of Israel is a testament to the indomitable spirit of my people. For a hundred generations, the Jewish people dreamed of returning to the Land of Israel. Even in our darkest hours, and we had so many, even in our darkest hours we never gave up hope of rebuilding our eternal capital Jerusalem.

The establishment of Israel made realizing that dream possible. It has enabled us to live as a free people in our ancestral homeland. It's enabled us to embrace Jews who've come from the four corners of the earth to find refuge from persecution. They came from war-torn Europe, from Yemen, Iraq, Morocco, from Ethiopia and the Soviet Union, from a hundred other lands. And today, as a rising tide of anti-Semitism once again sweeps across Europe and elsewhere, many Jews come to Israel to join us in building the Jewish future.

So here's my message to the rulers of Iran: your plan to destroy Israel will fail. Israel will not permit any force on earth to threaten its future. And here's my message to all the countries

represented here: whatever resolutions you may adopt in this building, whatever decisions you may take in your capitals, Israel will do whatever it must do to defend our state and to defend our people.

Distinguished delegates, as this deal with Iran moves ahead, I hope you'll enforce it...how can I put this? With a little more rigor than you showed with the six Security Council resolutions that Iran has systematically violated and which now have been effectively discarded. Make sure that the inspectors actually inspect. Make sure that the snapback sanctions actually snap back. And make sure that Iran's violations aren't swept under the Persian rug. Well, of one thing I can assure you, Israel will be watching... closely.

What the international community now needs to do is clear. First, make Iran comply with all its nuclear obligations. Keep Iran's feet to the fire. Second, check Iran's regional aggression. Support and strengthen those fighting Iran's aggression, beginning with Israel. Third, use sanctions and all the tools available to you to tear down Iran's global terror network.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Israel is working closely with our Arab peace partners to address our common security challenges from Iran and also the security challenges from ISIS and from others. We are also working with other states in the Middle East as well as countries in Africa, in Asia and beyond. Many in our region know that both Iran and ISIS are our common enemies. And when your enemies fight each other, don't strengthen either one, weaken both.

Common dangers are clearly bringing Israel and its Arab neighbors closer. And as we work together to thwart those dangers, I hope we'll build lasting partnerships, lasting partnerships for security, for prosperity and for peace. But in Israel, we never forget one thing. We never forget that the most important partner that Israel has, has always been and will always be, the United States of America.

The alliance between Israel and the United States is unshakeable. President Obama and I agree on the need to keep arms out of the hands of Iran's terror proxies. We agree on the need to stop Iran from destabilizing countries throughout the Middle East. Israel deeply appreciates President Obama's willingness to bolster our security, help Israel maintain its qualitative military edge and help Israel confront the enormous challenges we face. Israel is grateful that this sentiment is widely shared by the American people and its representatives in Congress, by both those who supported the deal and by those who opposed it. President Obama and I have both said that our differences over the nuclear deal are a disagreement within the family. But we have no disagreement about the need to work together to secure our common future. And what a great future it could be.

Israel is uniquely poised to seize the promise of the 21st century. Israel is a world leader in science and technology, in cyber, software, water, agriculture, medicine, biotechnology and so many other fields that are being revolutionized by Israeli ingenuity and Israeli innovation. Israel is the innovation nation. Israeli knowhow is everywhere. It's in your computers' microprocessors and

flash drives. It's in your smartphones, when you send instant messages and navigate your cars. It's on your farms when you drip irrigate your crops and keep your grains and produce fresh. It's in your universities, when you study Nobel Prize winning discoveries in chemistry and economics. It's in your medicine cabinets, when you use drugs to treat Parkinson's disease and Multiple Sclerosis. It's even on your plate, when you eat the delicious cherry tomato. That too was perfected in Israel, in case you didn't know.

We are so proud in Israel of the long strides our country has made in a short time. We're so proud that our small country is making such a huge contribution to the entire world. Yet the dreams of our people, enshrined for eternity by the great prophets of the Bible, those dreams will be fully realized only when there is peace. As the Middle East descends into chaos, Israel's peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan are two cornerstones of stability. Israel remains committed to achieving peace with the Palestinians as well. Israelis know the price of war. I know the price of war. I was nearly killed in battle. I lost many friends. I lost my beloved brother, Yoni. Those who know the price of war can best appreciate what the blessings of peace would mean for ourselves, our children, our grandchildren.

I am prepared to immediately, immediately, resume direct peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority without any preconditions whatsoever. Unfortunately, President Abbas said yesterday that he is not prepared to do this. Well, I hope he changes his mind. Because I remain committed to a vision of two states for two peoples, in which a demilitarized Palestinian state recognizes the Jewish state. You know, the peace process began over two decades ago. Yet despite the best efforts of six Israeli prime ministers—Rabin, Peres, Barak, Sharon, Olmert and myself—the Palestinians have consistently refused to end the conflict and make a final peace with Israel. And unfortunately, you heard that rejectionism again only yesterday from President Abbas. How can Israel make peace with a Palestinian partner who refuses to even sit at the negotiating table? Israel expects the Palestinian Authority to abide by its commitments. The Palestinians should not walk away from peace.

President Abbas, I know it's not easy. I know it's hard. But we owe it to our peoples to try, to continue to try, because together, if we actually negotiate and stop negotiating about the negotiation, if we actually sit down and try to resolve this conflict between us, recognize each other, not use a Palestinian state as a stepping stone for another Islamist dictatorship in the Middle East, but something that will live at peace next to the Jewish state, if we actually do that, we can do remarkable things for our peoples. The UN can help advance peace by supporting direct, unconditional negotiations between the parties. The UN won't help peace, certainly won't help advance peace by trying to impose solutions or by encouraging Palestinian rejectionism. And the UN, distinguished delegates, should do one more thing. The UN should finally rid itself of the obsessive bashing of Israel. Here's just one absurd example of this obsession. In four years of horrific violence in Syria, more than a quarter of a million people have lost their lives. That's more

than ten times, more than ten times the number of Israelis and Palestinians combined who have lost their lives in a century of conflict between us. Yet last year, this Assembly adopted 20 resolutions against Israel and just one resolution about the savage slaughter in Syria. Talk about injustice. Talk about disproportionality. Twenty. Count them. One against Syria. Well, frankly I am not surprised. To borrow a line from Yogi Berra, the late, great baseball player and part time philosopher, “When it comes to the annual bashing of Israel at the UN, it’s déjà vu all over again.” Enough!

Thirty one years after I stood here for the first time, I’m still asking, when will the UN finally check its anti-Israel fanaticism at the door, when will the UN finally stop slandering Israel as a threat to peace and actually start helping Israel advance peace? And the same question should be posed to Palestinian leaders. When will you start working with Israel to advance peace and reconciliation and stop libeling Israel, stop inciting hatred and violence? President Abbas, here’s a good place to begin. Stop spreading lies about Israel’s alleged intentions on the Temple Mount. Israel is fully committed to maintaining the status quo there. What President Abbas should be speaking out against are the actions of militant Islamists who are smuggling explosives into the al-Aqsa mosque and who are trying to prevent Jews and Christians from visiting the holy sites. That’s the real threat to these sacred sites.

A thousand years before the birth of Christianity, more than 1,500 years before the birth of Islam, King David made Jerusalem our capital, and King Solomon built the Temple on that mount. Yet Israel, Israel will always respect the sacred shrines of all. In a region plagued by violence and by unimaginable intolerance, in which Islamic fanatics are destroying the ancient treasures of civilization, Israel stands out as a towering beacon of enlightenment and tolerance. Far from endangering the holy sites, it is Israel that ensures their safety. Unlike the powers who have ruled Jerusalem in the past, Israel respects the holy sites and freedom of worship of all—Jews, Muslims, Christians, everyone. And that, ladies and gentlemen, will never change because Israel will always stay true to its values.

These values are on display each and every day when Israel’s feisty parliament vigorously debates every issue under the sun, when Israel’s Chief Justice sits in her chair at our fiercely independent Supreme Court, when our Christian community continues to grow and thrive from year to year as Christian communities are decimated elsewhere in the Middle East, when a brilliant young Israeli Muslim student gives her valedictorian address at one of our finest universities, and when Israeli doctors and nurses, doctors and nurses from the Israeli military, treat thousands of wounded from the killing fields of Syria and thousands more in the wake of natural disasters from Haiti to Nepal. This is the true face of Israel. These are the values of Israel. And in the Middle East, these values are under savage assault by militant Islamists who are forcing millions of terrified people to flee to distant shores.

Ten miles from ISIS, a few hundred yards from Iran’s murderous proxies, Israel stands in the breach proudly and courageously defending freedom and progress. Israel is civilization's front

line in the battle against barbarism. So here's a novel idea for the United Nations. Instead of continuing the shameful routine of bashing Israel, stand with Israel. Stand with Israel as we check the fanaticism at our door. Stand with Israel as we prevent that fanaticism from reaching your door. Ladies and Gentlemen, stand with Israel because Israel is not just defending itself. More than ever, Israel is defending you.