

At U.N Netanyahu renews calls for face-to-face negotiations

Stark Contrast Between Netanyahu and Abbas Approaches to Peace.... Confrontational Abbas Rewrites Reality...
Source: B'nai B'rith International News Release

Washington, D.C., Sept. 23, 2011: At the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu struck exactly the right tone when he called for direct negotiations with the Palestinians without preconditions.

Netanyahu said Israel wants peace and he wants peace. But he noted peace must be anchored in security and that Israel is willing to take risks for peace.

"All these potential cracks in Israel's security have to be sealed in a peace agreement before a Palestinian state is declared, not afterwards. Otherwise these problems will explode in our face and destroy the peace," Netanyahu said.

The contrast between Netanyahu's speech and that of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas could not have been greater.

During his address before the General Assembly, Abbas' confrontational speech included his promise that the Palestinian "popular resistance" to Israel will continue and he made repeated references to Israel's "occupying" and "apartheid" policies, demonstrating a sheer lack of investment in direct negotiations.

"Prime Minister Netanyahu struck the right tone in emphasizing direct peace talks over a U.N. resolution to create a viable Palestinian state," B'nai B'rith International President Allan J. Jacobs said. "Israel's very real security concerns—its still the target of terrorist rockets and mortars fired from Gaza—make meaningful direct talks a must for any hope of a lasting peace."

Earlier in the day, Abbas said he submitted an application to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the admission of Palestine to the United Nations as a full member state. Abbas urged Ban to relay the request to the full Security Council.

Palestinian moves at the United Nations serve only to isolate and delegitimize Israel, as it creates unrealistic expectations that are sure to come after U.N. interference. Such a vote will cause the vast majority of Palestinians to view Israel as the only obstacle to the implementation of their own state, when in fact, Palestinian leaders haven't participated in direct peace talks in years. A forced recognition of a Palestinian state won't resolve some of the biggest obstacles to peace.

"The Palestinian attempted end-run around negotiations, as presented by Abbas, rewrites history and can only be seen as a move to undermine and demonize Israel," B'nai B'rith International Executive Vice President Daniel S. Mariaschin said. "Netanyahu has laid out the best strategy for promoting a path toward peace not only between Israel and the Palestinians, but with all the countries of the region."

Netanyahu said Israel will not be the last country to welcome a Palestinian state to the United Nations; it would be the first, if the Palestinians agree to peace.

Jacobs and Mariaschin have been meeting with dozens of presidents, prime ministers, foreign ministers and other international leaders on the sidelines of the General Assembly. Meetings focused on the Palestinian resolution for a new state, the Durban commemoration and the Arab spring.

B'nai B'rith leaders joining Jacobs and Mariaschin at these high-level meetings include Chairman of the Executive Committee Gary Saltzman; Honorary President Richard D. Heideman, who led B'nai B'rith's Durban efforts; and B'nai B'rith leaders Stephen Stern, Michael Nachman, Gwen Zuares, Dan Tartakovski and B'nai B'rith Director of Latin American Affairs Eduardo Kohn. Meetings were organized by U.N. Affairs Director David J. Michaels and Program Officer Oren Drori.

Active in the United Nations since its inception, B'nai B'rith will continue to monitor developments and meet with world leaders to urge direct negotiations as the only path toward peace.