Will Obama Betray Israel?

November 1, 2016

By Isi Leibler

Israel Hayom

<http://www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter_opinion.php?id=17549>

Throughout his eight years in the White House, U.S. President Barak Obama has ‎insisted that he "has Israel's back."‎ The reality is that his appalling foreign policy has been geared toward the creation of ‎‎"daylight" between the U.S. and Israel.

To this end, Obama reneged on the long-standing ‎bipartisan policy that the U.S. would never be a party to forcing Israel into reverting to the ‎‎1949 armistice lines. That policy was reflected in the carefully drafted U.N. Security Council ‎Resolution 242, unanimously adopted on Nov. 22, 1967, which intimated that Israel ‎would never be expected to revert to indefensible borders. The armistice lines imposed at the ‎end of the War of Independence were never considered formal borders. They left Israel only 9 ‎miles wide at its narrowest point and were described by then-Foreign Minister Abba Eban as ‎the "Auschwitz borders."‎

In explaining the language of U.N. Resolution 242, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Arthur ‎Goldberg was specific. To achieve "secure and recognized boundaries" there would be ‎a necessity for both parties to make "territorial adjustments in their peace settlement, ‎encompassing less than a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied territories, ‎inasmuch as Israel's prior frontiers had proved to be notably insecure." It was also clearly ‎understood that withdrawals would only take place in the context of an overall peace ‎settlement.‎

In September 1968, President Lyndon Johnson stated that "it is clear … that a return to the ‎situation of June 4, 1967, will not bring peace. There must be secure and there must be ‎recognized borders."‎

President Ronald Reagan in September 1982 stated, "In the pre-1967 borders, Israel was ‎barely 10 miles wide at its narrowest point. The bulk of Israel's population lived within artillery ‎range of hostile armies. I am not about to ask Israel to live that way again." ‎

In September 1988, Secretary of State George Shultz declared, "Israel will never negotiate ‎from, or return to, the lines of partition or to the 1967 borders."‎

In January 2001, President Bill Clinton, in his final attempt to promote a solution, continued to ‎emphasize the importance to Israel of "secure and recognized boundaries."‎

Even the Palestinians who initially bitterly opposed Resolution 242 ultimately accepted it when ‎the PLO signed the Declaration of Principles with Israel in September 1993.‎

In an April 14, 2004, letter to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon responding to Israel's announcement ‎of a unilateral Gaza withdrawal, U.S. President George W. Bush wrote that "the United States ‎reiterates its steadfast commitment to Israel's security, including secure, defensible borders." ‎

More explicitly, Bush stated that "in light of new realities on the ground, including already ‎existing major Israeli population centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final ‎status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949, and all ‎previous efforts to negotiate a two-state solution have reached the same conclusion. It is ‎realistic to expect that any final status agreement will only be achieved on the basis of mutually ‎agreed changes that reflect these realities."

The U.S. Congress endorsed the letter in joint ‎resolutions by the Senate (95-3) and the House (407-9).‎

Sharon regarded these Bush commitments as a negotiated deal based on his total withdrawal ‎from Gaza. He considered this deal to be his most important diplomatic achievement and used it ‎vigorously in an attempt to justify what subsequently proved to be the disastrous withdrawal ‎from Gaza.‎

As late as November 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who was a major critic of Israel ‎within the Obama administration, still acknowledged the goal of "a Jewish state with secure ‎and recognized borders that reflects subsequent developments and meets Israeli security ‎requirements." ‎

On May 19, 2011, in a shameful humiliation, without any prior notice, just hours before ‎meeting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Obama stunned his guest by radically deviating ‎from and reneging on this long-standing bipartisan U.S. policy. ‎

He did so when it was clear that the Palestinian Authority was totally inflexible and the entire ‎region was being engulfed by a barbaric civil war. Obama chose that time to state that "the ‎borders of Israel and Palestine should be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps, ‎so that secure and recognized borders are established for both states." ‎

If adopted, that would effectively impose the indefensible 1949 armistice lines as the ‎benchmark for opening future negotiations, with any variation subject to Palestinian consent. ‎Given the consistent Palestinian track record of refusing to make any concessions, the concept ‎of "mutually agreed swaps" is pure fantasy. The fallback would be imposing the 1967 borders ‎which would entail forfeiting secure borders and ceding the major settlement blocs including ‎the Jewish neighborhoods of east Jerusalem, something no Israeli government could ‎contemplate. ‎

Netanyahu unquestionably represented the Israeli consensus when he firmly rejected these ‎proposals, which are now being vigorously pursued by the Europeans, led by France.‎

Until now, Obama's statements about 1967 borders were often played down by many as ‎merely diplomatic postures to humiliate Netanyahu.

But one should not underestimate ‎Obama's determination to punish Israel before he retires.‎

To her credit, presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton was unequivocal in her meeting with ‎Netanyahu on Sept. 26, stressing "her opposition to any attempt by outside parties to ‎impose a solution … including by the U.N. Security Council."‎

But the vibes from the Obama administration and State Department are ominous. While ‎thousands of Arabs are being massacred almost daily in the region, the State Department ‎focuses its energy on statements condemning the Israeli construction of 30 houses replacing ‎homes to be demolished within the boundaries of an existing settlement.‎

This obviously encourages the Europeans, especially the French, to intensify their anti-Israeli ‎policy at the U.N. Security Council.‎

There is a growing fear that despite U.S. public opinion, the unequivocal support of Congress ‎and the stated policy of Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, Obama's obsession to distance ‎the U.S. diplomatically from Israel could lead him to forgo employing the U.S. veto in the ‎Security Council, or worse, that he himself would endorse a resolution that could pave the ‎way for global sanctions against Israel.‎

The long-term damage to Israel of such a Security Council resolution, allowed or endorsed by ‎the U.S., must not be underestimated.‎

Those American Jewish leaders who can have some impact should be actively agitating and ‎creating an atmosphere to ensure Obama realizes that by pursuing his anti-Israeli agenda, he ‎is acting against the will of the nation.‎

To the extent that they still have any relevance, Jewish leaders should speak out before it ‎is too late. In particular, pro-Israeli liberals such as Alan Dershowitz and Haim Saban have an ‎obligation to act. ‎

After having no qualms condemning the Republicans for not supporting a two-state solution, if ‎the Anti-Defamation League wishes to retain any integrity, its CEO should be appealing to his ‎former boss, Obama, not to betray Israel.‎

In urging restraint, it should be stressed that for a lame-duck president in his remaining days in office to reverse U.S. policy in this manner would make a mockery of democratic ‎procedures. It would be contrary to American public opinion, in direct breach of a bipartisan ‎resolution of Congress, and in conflict with the policy enunciated by both presidential candidates, ‎particularly Hillary Clinton, who explicitly committed herself to opposing U.N. intervention. ‎