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Address to the United Nations General Assembly



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Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Nearly 62 years ago, the United Nations recognized the rights of the Jews, an ancient people 3,500 years-old, to a state of their own in their ancestral homeland.

I stand here today as the Prime Minister of Israel, the Jewish state, and I speak to you on behalf of my country and my people.

The United Nations was founded after the carnage of World War II -- after the horrors of the Holocaust. It was charged with preventing the reoccurrence of such horrendous events.

Nothing has undermined that mission, nothing has impeded it more, than the systematic assault on the truth. Yesterday the President of Iran stood at this very podium, spewing his latest anti-Semitic rants. Just a few days earlier, he again claimed that the Holocaust is a lie.

Last month, I went to a villa in a suburb of Berlin called Wannsee. There, on January 20, 1942, after a hearty meal, senior Nazi officials met and decided to exterminate my people. They left detailed minutes of that meeting. And these minutes have been preserved for posterity by successive German governments. Here is a copy of the minutes of the meeting of senior Nazi officials, instructing the Nazi government exactly how to carry out the extermination of the Jewish people. Is this protocol a lie? Is the German government -- all German governments -- lying?



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A day before I was in Wannsee, I was given in Berlin the original construction plans for the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. These plans of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, I now hold in my hand. They contain a signature by Heinrich Himmler, Hitler's deputy, himself. Are these plans of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, where one million Jews were murdered -- are they a lie too?

This June, President Obama visited another concentration camp, one of many -- the Buchenwald concentration camp. Did President Obama pay tribute to a lie?

And what of the Auschwitz survivors whose arms still bear the tattooed numbers branded on them by the Nazis? Are those tattoos a lie too? One-third of all Jews perished in the great conflagration of the holocaust. Nearly every Jewish family was affected, including my own. My wife's grandparents, her father's two sisters and his three brothers, and all the aunts, and uncles, and cousins, all murdered by the Nazis. Is this a lie?

Yesterday, the man who calls the Holocaust a lie spoke from this podium. To those who refused to come, and to those who left in protest, I commend you. You stood up for moral clarity and you brought honor to your countries.

But to those who gave this Holocaust-denier a hearing, I say on behalf of my people, the Jewish people, and decent people everywhere: Have you no shame? Have you no decency?

A mere six decades after the Holocaust, you give legitimacy to a man who denies the murder of six million Jews while promising to wipe out the state of Israel -- the state of the Jews?

What a disgrace! What a mockery of the charter of the United Nations! Now perhaps some of you think that this man and his odious regime, perhaps they threaten only the Jews. Well, if you think that, you're wrong -- dead wrong.

History has shown us time and time again that what starts with attacks on the Jews eventually ends up engulfing many, many others.

For this Iranian regime is fueled by an extreme fundamentalism that burst onto the world scene three decades ago after lying dormant for centuries. In the past 30 years, this fanaticism has swept across the globe with a murderous violence that knows no bounds, and with a cold-blooded impartiality in the choice of its victims. It has callously slaughtered Moslems and Christians, Jews and Hindus, and many others. Though it is comprised of different offshoots, the adherents of this unforgiving creed seek to return humanity to medieval times.

Wherever they can, they impose a backward regimented society where women, minorities, gays or anyone else not deemed to be a true believer is brutally subjugated. The struggle against this fanaticism does not pit faith against faith nor civilization against civilization.



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It pits civilization against barbarism, the 21st century against the 9th century, those who sanctify life against those who glorify death.

Now the primitivism of the 9th century ought to be no match for the progress of the 21st century. The allure of freedom, the power of technology, the reach of communications should surely win the day. Ultimately, the past cannot triumph over the future. And our future offers all nations magnificent bounties of hope. Because the pace of progress is growing, and it is growing exponentially.

It took us centuries to get from the printing press to the telephone, decades to get from the telephone to the personal computer, and only a few years to get from the personal computer to the internet.

What seemed impossible a few years ago is already outdated, and we can scarcely fathom the changes that are yet to come. We will crack the genetic code. We will cure the incurable. We will lengthen our lives. We will find a cheap alternative to fossil fuel and yes, we will clean up the planet.

I am proud that my country, Israel, is at the forefront of many of these advances -- in science and technology, in medicine and biology, in agriculture and water, in energy and the environment. These innovations, in my country and many of your countries, offer humanity a sunlit future of unimagined promise.

But if the most primitive fanaticism can acquire the most deadly weapons, the march of history could be reversed for a time. And like the belated victory over the Nazis, the forces of progress and freedom, they will prevail only after an horrific toll of blood and fortune has been exacted from mankind. This is why the greatest threat facing the world today is the marriage between religious fundamentalism and the weapons of mass destruction.

The most urgent challenge facing this body today is to prevent the tyrants of Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Are the members of the United Nations up to that challenge? Will the international community confront a despotism that terrorizes its own people as they bravely stand up for freedom?

Will it take action against the dictators who stole an election in broad daylight and then gunned down Iranian protesters who died in the sidewalks -- on the street choking in their own blood? Will the international community thwart the world's most pernicious sponsor and practitioner of terrorism?

Above all, will the international community stop the terrorist regime of Iran from developing atomic weapons, thereby endangering the peace of the entire world?

The people of Iran are courageously standing up to this regime.



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People of goodwill around the world stand with them, as do thousands of people who have been protesting and demonstrating outside this hall all of this week. Will the United Nations stand by their side?

Well, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The jury is still out on the United Nations, and recent signs are not encouraging. Rather than condemning the terrorists and their Iranian patrons, some here in the United Nations have condemned their victims. This is exactly what a recent UN report on Gaza did, falsely equating terrorists with those they targeted.

For eight long years, Hamas fired those rockets from Gaza on nearby Israeli cities and citizens. Thousands of missiles, mortars, hurling down from the sky on schools, on homes, shopping centers, bus stops. Years after, as these missiles were deliberately fired on our civilians, not one UN resolution was passed condemning those criminal attacks. We heard nothing -- absolutely nothing -- from the UN Human Rights Council, a misnamed institution if there ever was one.

In 2005, hoping to advance peace, Israel unilaterally withdrew from every inch of Gaza. It was very painful. We dismantled 21 settlements -- really bedroom communities and farms. We uprooted over 8,000 Israelis. We just yanked them out from their homes. We did this because many in Israel believed that this would get peace. Well, we didn't get peace. Instead we got an Iranian backed terror base fifty miles from Tel Aviv. But life in the Israeli towns and cities immediately next to Gaza became nothing less than nightmare. You see, the Hamas rocket launchers and the rocket attacks not only continued after we left, they actually increased dramatically -- they increased tenfold. And again, the UN was silent. Absolutely silent.

Well finally, after eight years of this unremitting assault, Israel was forced to respond. But how should we have responded? Well, there is only one example in history of thousands of rockets being fired on a country's civilian population. This happened when the Nazis rocketed British cities during World War II. During that war, the allies leveled German cities, causing hundreds of thousands of casualties. I'm not passing judgment -- I'm stating a fact. A fact that is the product of the decision of great and honorable men, the leaders of Britain and the United States, fighting an evil force in WWII.

It is also a fact that Israel chose to respond differently. Faced with an enemy committing a double war crime of firing on civilians while hiding behind civilians, Israel sought to conduct surgical strikes directed against the rocket launchers themselves.

Now mind you, that was no easy task because the terrorists were firing missiles from homes and from schools. They were using mosques as weapons depots, as missile caches, and they were ferreting explosives in ambulances. Israel, by contrast, tried to minimize casualties by urging Palestinian civilians to vacate the targeted areas.



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We dropped countless flyers -- they cannot be counted, there were so many, obviously -- countless flyers over their homes. We sent thousands and thousands of text messages to the Palestinian residents. We made thousands and thousands of cellular phone calls, urging them to vacate -- to leave. Never has a country gone to such extraordinary lengths to remove the enemy's civilian population from harm's way.

Yet faced with an absolutely clear cut case of aggressor and victim, who do you think the United Nations' Human Rights Council decided to condemn? Israel. A democracy legitimately defending itself against terror is morally hanged, drawn and quartered, and given an unfair trial to boot.

By these twisted standards, the UN Human Rights Council would have dragged Roosevelt and Churchill to the dock as war criminals. What a perversion of truth. What a perversion of justice.

Now, delegates of the United Nations and the governments whom you represent, you have a decision to make.

Will you accept this farce?

Because if you do, the United Nations would revert to its darkest days, when the worst violators of human rights sat in judgment against the law-abiding democracies, when Zionism was equated with racism, and when an automatic majority could be mustered to declare that the earth is flat.

If you had to choose a date when the United Nations began its descent, almost a free fall, and lost the respect of many thoughtful people in the international community, it was that decision in 1975 to equate Zionism with racism.

Now this body has a choice to make. If it does not reject this biased report, it would vitiate itself. It would begin or re-begin the process of vitiating itself from its own relevance and importance. But it would do something else, it would send a message to the terrorists everywhere, saying: Terrorism pays; all you have to do is launch your attacks from densely populated areas and you will win immunity. And then a third thing, in condemning Israel, this body would also deal a mortal blow to peace. Let me explain why.

When Israel left Gaza, many hoped that the missile attacks would stop. Others believed that even if they don't stop, at the very least, Israel would have made this gesture -- extraordinary gesture -- for peace. But it would have international legitimacy to exercise its right of self-defense if peace failed. What legitimacy? What self-defense?

The same UN that cheered Israel as we left Gaza, the same UN that promised to back our right of self-defense, now accuses us -- my people, my country -- of being war criminals?



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And for what? For acting responsibly in self-defense. For acting in a way that any country would act. With a restraint unmatched by many. What a travesty!

Ladies and Gentlemen, Israel justly defended itself against terror. This biased and unjust report provides a clear-cut test for all governments. Will you stand with Israel or will you stand with the terrorists?

We must know the answer to that question now -- not later. Because if Israel is again asked to take more risks for peace, we must know today that you will stand with us tomorrow. Only if we have the confidence that we can defend ourselves can we take further risks for peace.

And make no mistake about it, all of Israel wants peace.

Any time an Arab leader genuinely wanted peace with us, we made peace. We made peace with Egypt led by Anwar Sadat. We made peace with Jordan led by King Hussein. And if the Palestinians truly want peace, I and my government, and my people, will make peace. But we want a genuine peace, a defensible peace, a permanent peace. In 1947, this body voted to establish two states for two peoples -- a Jewish state and an Arab state. The Jews accepted this resolution. The Arabs rejected it and invaded the embryonic Jewish state with the hopes of annihilating it.

We ask the Palestinians to finally do what they refused to do for 62 years: Say yes to a Jewish state. As simple, as clear, as elementary, as that. Just as we are asked to recognize a nation-state for the Palestinian people, the Palestinians must be asked to recognize the nation state of the Jewish people. The Jewish people are not foreign conquerors in the Land of Israel. It is the land of our forefathers.

Inscribed on the walls outside this building is the great Biblical vision of peace: "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. They shall learn war no more." These words were spoken by the great Jewish prophet Isaiah 2,800 years ago as he walked in my country, in my city, in the hills of Judea, and in the streets of Jerusalem.

We are not strangers to this land. This is our homeland. But as deeply connected as we are to our homeland, we also recognize that the Palestinians also live there and they want a home of their own. We want to live side by side with them, two free peoples living in peace, living in prosperity, living in dignity. Peace, prosperity, and dignity require one other element. We must have security. The Palestinians should have all the powers to govern themselves except a handful of powers that could endanger Israel.

And this is why the Palestinian state must be effectively demilitarized. I say, "effectively," because we don't want another Gaza, or another south Lebanon, another Iranian backed terror base abutting Jerusalem and perched on the hills a few kilometers from Tel Aviv.

We want peace.



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And I believe that with goodwill and with hard work, such a peace can be achieved. But it requires from all of us to roll back the forces of terror, led by Iran, that seek to destroy peace, that seek to eliminate Israel and to overthrow the world order. The question facing the international community is whether it is prepared to confront those forces or to accommodate them.

Over seventy years ago, Winston Churchill lamented what he called "the confirmed unteachability of mankind." And by that he meant the unfortunate habit of civilized societies to sleep and to slumber until danger nearly overtakes them.

Churchill bemoaned what he called -- I'm reading -- "the want of foresight, the unwillingness to act when action will be simple and effective, the lack of clear thinking, the confusion of counsel until the emergency comes, until self-preservation strikes its jarring gong."

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I speak here today in the hope that Churchill's assessment of the "unteachability of mankind" is for once proven wrong.

I speak here today in the hope that we can learn from history -- that we can prevent danger in time.

In the spirit of the timeless words spoken to Joshua over 3,000 years ago, let us be strong and of good courage. Let us confront this peril, secure our future and, God willing, forge an enduring peace for generations to come.

*Adonai yevarech et amo vashalom. Adonai yiten oz l'amo. Adonai yevarech et amo vashalom.*¹

Thank you very much.

¹Translation: The Lord will bless His people with peace. The Lord will give strength to His people. The Lord will bless His people with peace. (Ps. 29:11)