

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Speech at the United Nations General Assembly

September 29, 2014

Thank you, Mr. President,

Distinguished delegates,

I come here from Jerusalem to speak on behalf of my people, the people of Israel. I've come here to speak about the dangers we face and about the opportunities we see. I've come here to expose the brazen lies spoken from this very podium against my country and against the brave soldiers who defend it.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The people of Israel pray for peace.

But our hopes and the world's hope for peace are in danger. Because everywhere we look, militant Islam is on the march.

It's not militants.

It's not Islam.

It's militant Islam.

Typically, its first victims are other Muslims, but it spares no one. Christians, Jews, Yazidis, Kurds – no creed, no faith, no ethnic group is beyond its sights. And it's rapidly spreading in every part of the world.

You know the famous American saying: "All politics is local"? For the militant Islamists, "All politics is global." Because their ultimate goal is to dominate the world.

Now, that threat might seem exaggerated to some, since it starts out small, like a cancer that attacks a particular part of the body. But left unchecked, the cancer grows, metastasizing over wider and wider areas. To protect the peace and security of the world, we must remove this cancer before it's too late.

Last week, many of the countries represented here rightly applauded President Obama for leading the effort to confront ISIS. And yet weeks before, some of these same countries, the same countries that now support confronting ISIS, opposed Israel for confronting Hamas. They evidently don't understand that ISIS and Hamas are branches of the same poisonous tree.

ISIS and Hamas share a fanatical creed, which they both seek to impose well beyond the territory under their control.

Listen to ISIS's self-declared caliph, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. This is what he said two months ago:

***A day will soon come when the Muslim will walk everywhere as a master...
The Muslims will cause the world to hear and understand the meaning of
terrorism...
and destroy the idol of democracy.***

Now listen to Khaled Meshaal, the leader of Hamas. He proclaims a similar vision of the future:

***We say this to the West...
By Allah you will be defeated.
Tomorrow our nation will sit on the throne of the world.***

As Hamas's charter makes clear, Hamas's immediate goal is to destroy Israel. But Hamas has a broader objective. They also want a caliphate. Hamas shares the global ambitions of its fellow militant Islamists.

That's why its supporters wildly cheered in the streets of Gaza as thousands of Americans were murdered on 9/11. And that's why its leaders condemned the United States for killing Osama Bin Laden, whom they praised as a holy warrior.

So when it comes to their ultimate goals, Hamas is ISIS and ISIS is Hamas.

And what they share in common, all militant Islamists share in common:

- Boko Haram in Nigeria;
- Ash-Shabab in Somalia;
- Hezbollah in Lebanon;
- An-Nusrah in Syria;
- The Mahdi Army in Iraq;
- And the Al-Qaeda branches in Yemen, Libya, the Philippines, India and elsewhere.

Some are radical Sunnis, some are radical Shi'ites. Some want to restore a pre-medieval caliphate from the 7th century. Others want to trigger the apocalyptic return of an imam from the 9th century. They operate in different lands, they target different victims and they even kill each other in their quest for supremacy.

But they all share a fanatic ideology. They all seek to create ever expanding enclaves of militant Islam where there is no freedom and no tolerance – Where women are treated as chattel, Christians are decimated, and minorities are subjugated, sometimes given the stark choice: convert or die.

For them, anyone can be an infidel, including fellow Muslims.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Militant Islam's ambition to dominate the world seems mad. But so too did the global ambitions of another fanatic ideology that swept to power eight decades ago.

The Nazis believed in a master race. The militant Islamists believe in a master faith. They just disagree about who among them will be the master... of the master faith. That's what they truly disagree about. Therefore, the question before us is whether militant Islam will have the power to realize its unbridled ambitions.

There is one place where that could soon happen: The Islamic State of Iran.

For 35 years, Iran has relentlessly pursued the global mission which was set forth by its founding ruler, Ayatollah Khomeini, in these words:

***We will export our revolution to the entire world.
Until the cry "There is no God but Allah" will echo throughout the world over...***

And ever since, the regime's brutal enforcers, Iran's Revolutionary Guards, have done exactly that.

Listen to its current commander, General Muhammad Ali Ja'afari. And he clearly stated this goal. He said:

***Our Imam did not limit the Islamic Revolution to this country...
Our duty is to prepare the way for an Islamic world government...***

Iran's President Rouhani stood here last week, and shed crocodile tears over what he called "the globalization of terrorism."

Maybe he should spare us those phony tears and have a word instead with the commanders of Iran's Revolutionary Guards. He could ask them to call off Iran's global terror campaign, which has included attacks in two dozen countries on five continents since 2011 alone.

To say that Iran doesn't practice terrorism is like saying Derek Jeter never played shortstop for the New York Yankees.

This bemoaning of the Iranian president of the spread of terrorism has got to be one of history's greatest displays of doubletalk.

Now, some still argue that Iran's global terror campaign, its subversion of countries throughout the Middle East and well beyond the Middle East, some argue that this is the work of the extremists. They say things are changing. They point to last year's elections in Iran. They claim that Iran's smooth talking President and Foreign Minister, they've changed not only the tone of Iran's foreign policy but also its substance. They believe Rouhani and Zarif genuinely want to reconcile with the West, that they've abandoned the global mission of the Islamic Revolution.

Really?

So let's look at what Foreign Minister Zarif wrote in his book just a few years ago:

*We have a fundamental problem with the West,
and especially with America.
This is because we are heirs to a global mission,
which is tied to our raison d'etre...*

A global mission which is tied to our very reason of being.

And then Zarif asks a question, I think an interesting one. *He says:*

How come Malaysia [he's referring to an overwhelmingly Muslim country] – *how come Malaysia doesn't have similar problems?*

And he answers:

Because Malaysia is not trying to change the international order.

That's your moderate.

So don't be fooled by Iran's manipulative charm offensive. It's designed for one purpose, and for one purpose only: To lift the sanctions and remove the obstacles to Iran's path to the bomb. The Islamic Republic is now trying to bamboozle its way to an agreement that will remove the sanctions it still faces, and leave it with the capacity of thousands of centrifuges to enrich uranium.

This would effectively cement Iran's place as a threshold military nuclear power. In the future, at a time of its choosing, Iran, the world's most dangerous state in the world's most dangerous region, would obtain the world's most dangerous weapons.

Allowing that to happen would pose the gravest threat to us all.

It's one thing to confront militant Islamists on pick-up trucks, armed with Kalashnikov rifles. It's another thing to confront militant Islamists armed with weapons of mass destruction.

I remember that last year, everyone here was rightly concerned about the chemical weapons in Syria, including the possibility that they would fall into the hands of terrorists.

That didn't happen. And President Obama deserves great credit for leading the diplomatic effort to dismantle virtually all of Syria's chemical weapons capability.

Imagine how much more dangerous the Islamic State, ISIS, would be if it possessed chemical weapons. Now imagine how much more dangerous the Islamic state of Iran would be if it possessed nuclear weapons.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Would you let ISIS enrich uranium?

Would you let ISIS build a heavy water reactor?

Would you let ISIS develop intercontinental ballistic missiles?

Of course you wouldn't.

Then you mustn't let the Islamic State of Iran do those things either.

Because here's what will happen:

Once Iran produces atomic bombs, all the charm and all the smiles will suddenly disappear. They'll just vanish. It's then that the ayatollahs will show their true face and unleash their aggressive fanaticism on the entire world.

There is only one responsible course of action to address this threat:

Iran's nuclear military capabilities must be fully dismantled.

Make no mistake – ISIS must be defeated. But to defeat ISIS and leave Iran as a threshold nuclear power is to win the battle and lose the war.

To defeat ISIS and leave Iran as a threshold nuclear power is to win the battle and lose the war.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The fight against militant Islam is indivisible. When militant Islam succeeds anywhere, it's emboldened everywhere. When it suffers a blow in one place, it's set back in every place.

That's why Israel's fight against Hamas is not just our fight. It's your fight.

Israel is fighting a fanaticism today that your countries may be forced to fight tomorrow.

For 50 days this past summer, Hamas fired thousands of rockets at Israel, many of them supplied by Iran.

I want you to think about what your countries would do if thousands of rockets were fired at your cities. Imagine millions of your citizens having seconds at most to scramble to bomb shelters, day after day.

You wouldn't let terrorists fire rockets at your cities with impunity. Nor would you let terrorists dig dozens of terror tunnels under your borders to infiltrate your towns in order to murder and kidnap your citizens.

Israel justly defended itself against both rocket attacks and terror tunnels.

Yet Israel also faced another challenge. We faced a propaganda war.

Because, in an attempt to win the world's sympathy, Hamas cynically used Palestinian civilians as human shields. It used schools, not just schools - UN schools, private homes, mosques, even hospitals to store and fire rockets at Israel.

As Israel surgically struck at the rocket launchers and at the tunnels, Palestinian civilians were tragically but unintentionally killed. There are heartrending images that resulted, and these fueled libelous charges that Israel was deliberately targeting civilians.

We were not.

We deeply regret every single civilian casualty. And the truth is this:

Israel was doing everything to minimize Palestinian civilian casualties. Hamas was doing everything to maximize Israeli civilian casualties and Palestinian civilian casualties. Israel dropped flyers, made phone calls, sent text messages, broadcast warnings in Arabic on Palestinian television, always to enable Palestinian civilians to evacuate targeted areas.

No other country and no other army in history have gone to greater lengths to avoid casualties among the civilian population of their enemies.

This concern for Palestinian life was all the more remarkable, given that Israeli civilians were being bombarded by rockets day after day, night after night. As their families were being rocketed by Hamas, Israel's citizen army – the brave soldiers of the IDF, our young boys and girls – they upheld the highest moral values of any army in the world.

Israel's soldiers deserve not condemnation, but admiration. Admiration from decent people everywhere.

Now here's what Hamas did: Hamas embedded its missile batteries in residential areas and told Palestinians to ignore Israel's warnings to leave. And just in case people didn't get the message, they executed Palestinian civilians in Gaza who dared to protest.

No less reprehensible, Hamas deliberately placed its rockets where Palestinian children live and play. Let me show you a photograph. It was taken by a France 24 crew during the recent conflict. It shows two Hamas rocket launchers, which were used to attack us. You see three children playing next to them. Hamas deliberately put its rockets in hundreds of residential areas like this. Hundreds of them.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a war crime.

And I say to President Abbas, these are the war crimes committed by your Hamas partners in the national unity government which you head and you are responsible for. And these are the real war crimes you should have investigated, or spoken out against from this podium last week.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Israeli children huddled in bomb shelters and Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system knocked Hamas rockets out of the sky, the profound moral difference between Israel and Hamas couldn't have been clearer:

Israel was using its missiles to protect its children.

Hamas was using its children to protect its missiles.

By investigating Israel rather than Hamas for war crimes, the UN Human Rights Council has betrayed its noble mission to protect the innocent. In fact, what it's doing is to turn the laws of war upside-down. Israel, which took unprecedented steps to minimize civilian casualties,

Israel is condemned. Hamas, which both targeted and hid behind civilians – that a double war crime - Hamas is given a pass.

The Human Rights Council is thus sending a clear message to terrorists everywhere:

Use civilians as human shields. Use them again and again and again. You know why? Because sadly, it works.

By granting international legitimacy to the use of human shields, the UN's Human Rights Council has thus become a Terrorist Rights Council, and it will have repercussions. It probably already has, about the use of civilians as human shields.

It's not just our interest. It's not just our values that are under attack. It's your interests and your values.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We live in a world steeped in tyranny and terror, where gays are hanged from cranes in Tehran, political prisoners are executed in Gaza, young girls are abducted en masse in Nigeria and hundreds of thousands are butchered in Syria, Libya and Iraq. Yet nearly half, nearly half of the UN Human Rights Council's resolutions focusing on a single country have been directed against Israel, the one true democracy in the Middle East – Israel. where issues are openly debated in a boisterous parliament, where human rights are protected by independent courts and where women, gays and minorities live in a genuinely free society.

The Human Rights... (that's an oxymoron, the UN Human Rights Council, but I'll use it just the same), the Council's biased treatment of Israel is only one manifestation of the return of the world's oldest prejudices.

We hear mobs today in Europe call for the gassing of Jews. We hear some national leaders compare Israel to the Nazis. This is not a function of Israel's policies. It's a function of diseased minds. And that disease has a name. It's called anti-Semitism.

It is now spreading in polite society, where it masquerades as legitimate criticism of Israel.

For centuries the Jewish people have been demonized with blood libels and charges of deicide. Today, the Jewish state is demonized with the apartheid libel and charges of genocide.

Genocide?

In what moral universe does genocide include warning the enemy's civilian population to get out of harm's way? Or ensuring that they receive tons, tons of humanitarian aid each day, even as thousands of rockets are being fired at us? Or setting up a field hospital to aid for their wounded?

Well, I suppose it's the same moral universe where a man who wrote a dissertation of lies about the Holocaust, and who insists on a Palestine free of Jews, Judenrein, can stand at this podium and shamelessly accuse Israel of genocide and ethnic cleansing.

In the past, outrageous lies against the Jews were the precursors to the wholesale slaughter of our people.

But no more.

Today we, the Jewish people, have the power to defend ourselves.

We will defend ourselves against our enemies on the battlefield. We will expose their lies against us in the court of public opinion.

Israel will continue to stand proud and unbowed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite the enormous challenges facing Israel, I believe we have an historic opportunity.

After decades of seeing Israel as their enemy, leading states in the Arab world increasingly recognize that together we and they face many of the same dangers: principally this means a nuclear-armed Iran and militant Islamist movements gaining ground in the Sunni world.

Our challenge is to transform these common interests to create a productive partnership. One that would build a more secure, peaceful and prosperous Middle East.

Together we can strengthen regional security. We can advance projects in water, agriculture, in transportation, in health, in energy, in so many fields.

I believe the partnership between us can also help facilitate peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Many have long assumed that an Israeli-Palestinian peace can help facilitate a broader rapprochement between Israel and the Arab World. But these days I think it may work the other way around: Namely that a broader rapprochement between Israel and the Arab world may help facilitate an Israeli-Palestinian peace.

And therefore, to achieve that peace, we must look not only to Jerusalem and Ramallah, but also to Cairo, to Amman, Abu Dhabi, Riyadh and elsewhere. I believe peace can be realized with the active involvement of Arab countries, those that are willing to provide political, material and other indispensable support.

I'm ready to make a historic compromise, not because Israel is occupying a foreign land. The people of Israel are not occupiers in the Land of Israel. History, archeology and common sense all make clear that we have had a singular attachment to this land for over 3,000 years.

I want peace because I want to create a better future for my people.

But it must be a genuine peace, one that is anchored in mutual recognition and enduring security arrangements, rock solid security arrangements on the ground. Because you see, Israel's withdrawals from Lebanon and Gaza created two militant Islamic enclaves on our borders from which tens of thousands of rockets have been fired at Israel.

These sobering experiences heighten Israel's security concerns regarding potential territorial concessions in the future. Those security concerns are even greater today.

Just look around you.

The Middle East is in chaos. States are disintegrating. Militant Islamists are filling the void.

Israel cannot have territories from which it withdraws taken over by Islamic militants yet again, as happened in Gaza and Lebanon. That would place the likes of ISIS within mortar range – a few miles – of 80% of our population.

Think about that. The distance between the 1967 lines and the suburbs of Tel Aviv is like the distance between the UN building here and Times Square. Israel's a tiny country. That's why in any peace agreement, which will obviously necessitate a territorial compromise, I will always insist that Israel be able to defend itself by itself against any threat.

Yet despite all that has happened, some still don't take Israel's security concerns seriously.

But I do, and I always will.

Because, as Prime Minister of Israel, I am entrusted with the awesome responsibility of ensuring the future of the Jewish people and the future of the Jewish state.

And no matter what pressure is brought to bear, I will never waver in fulfilling that responsibility.

I believe that with a fresh approach from our neighbors, we can advance peace despite the difficulties we face.

In Israel, we have a record of making the impossible possible. We've made a desolate land flourish. And with very few natural resources, we have used the fertile minds of our people to turn Israel into a global center of technology and innovation.

Peace, of course, would enable Israel to realize its full potential and to bring a promising future not only for our people, not only for the Palestinian people, but for many, many others in our region.

But the old template for peace must be updated. It must take into account new realities and new roles and responsibilities for our Arab neighbors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is a new Middle East. It presents new dangers, but also new opportunities.

Israel is prepared to work with Arab partners and the international community to confront those dangers and to seize those opportunities.

Together we must recognize the global threat of militant Islam, the primacy of dismantling Iran's nuclear weapons capability and the indispensable role of Arab states in advancing peace with the Palestinians.

All this may fly in the face of conventional wisdom, but it's the truth. And the truth must always be spoken, especially here, in the United Nations.

Isaiah, our great prophet of peace, taught us nearly 3,000 years ago in Jerusalem to speak truth to power.

לְמַעַן צִיּוֹן לֹא אֶחְשֶׁה *For the sake of Zion, I will not be silent.*

וּלְמַעַן יְרוּשָׁלַיִם לֹא אֶשְׁקוּט *For the sake of Jerusalem, I will not be still.*

עַד-יֵצֵא כְּנֹגַהּ צְדָקָה *Until her justice shines bright,*

וְיִשׁוּעָתָהּ כְּלַפִּיד יִבְרָעַר. *And her salvation glows like a flaming torch.*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let's light a torch of truth and justice to safeguard our common future.

Thank you.