

"Where we Stand"

In light of the historic partnership binding the United States and Israel, the JCRC shares concerns regarding the events of last week, when Vice President Biden was surprised by an Israeli diplomatic announcement. Prime Minister Netanyahu apologized, explaining that he, too, was taken by surprise, and the Vice President graciously accepted that apology before he even left the country.

JCRC is concerned that this momentary difficulty between the US and Israel not be permitted to distort this unbreakable and steadfast relationship which is based upon the bonds of shared values - a commitment to democracy, individual rights and the rule of law - as well as common strategic interests. We remember the Vice President's statement during his trip that support for Israel is "a fundamental national self-interest on the part of the United States" and that "America has no better friend in the community of nations than Israel."

We note

- that the unprecedented 10 month building freeze agreed to by Prime Minister Netanyahu specifically exempted Jerusalem and that the housing units at issue are located in a neighborhood which all parties understand will remain part of Israel under any peace agreement;
- that the Hurva synagogue in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, whose re-dedication was cynically exploited by the Palestinian Authority as an attack on Al-Aksa Mosque and used to promote a riot, is unrelated to the housing issue and is, in fact, a re-build of a previously existing synagogue destroyed by the Jordanians in 1948, and in no way threatens the Mosque;
- that Israel seeks peace with its Palestinian neighbors and is ready to participate in negotiations without pre-conditions;
- that the involvement of the United States is critically important for the parties to make progress in that regard, and that language used by the Administration may undermine the possibility of progress by encouraging maximalist positions by the parties;
- that the Palestinian Authority needs to end incitement and prepare its people for compromise, and be encouraged to join negotiations;
- that despite differences on significant issues, all parties - the US, Israel and the Palestinian Authority - should be held responsible for working toward peace;
- that the unshakeable friendship of the US is necessary for Israel to feel confident about taking what will surely be enormous risks for peace;

- that the United States and Israel must continue to work together to counter the Iranian pursuit of nuclear weapons, the most serious threat to a peaceful Middle East.

JCRC urges both Israel and the US to intensify efforts to strengthen communication and cooperation between them to avoid miscommunication or misunderstanding that would embolden those who would undermine a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the shared Israel-US goal of a safe and secure Israel.

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