

Obama, Netanyahu and the Congress: A Boycott-Divestment-Sanction (BDS) Campaign Directed Towards the U.SA

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When Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the U.S. Congress in a joint session on May 24 it gave the right-wing extremist Israeli leader 29 standing ovations—four more than it even gave Barack Obama in his State of the Union address earlier this year.

It was a disgusting love fest, devoid of any understanding of reality or appreciation of U.S. interests in the region. Despite the numerous lies and distortions that filled the speech, members of Congress were racing one another to stand, smile, and declare their loyalty to the Zionist state.

The extensive record of over six decades of successive Israeli governments enforcing institutionalized discrimination and exclusion against its minority Arab citizens as well as the entrenched policies of the military occupation against four million Palestinians are well documented. Netanyahu's claim of free access to holy places to all for the first time in the history of Jerusalem is not only contradicted by the historical record, but also by his own country's continuous restrictions against the non-Jewish faithful.

The significance of Netanyahu's congressional speech is that it served as the final nail in the coffin of the so-called two-state solution. He paid lip service to the establishment of a Palestinian state that lacked all the conditions of a viable state including sovereignty, independence, controlled borders, contiguity, and economic viability.

He called for an unconditional return to negotiations while pre-determining all the final status issues, including a reversal of prior agreements: No to Arab rights in East Jerusalem. No to withdrawal to 1967 borders. No to dismantling illegal settlements or removal of colonists from Palestinian territories. No to the right of return of the Palestinian refugee, a right enshrined in international law and U.N. resolutions since 1949. No to sovereignty or security to the Palestinians—insisting instead on demilitarized Bantustans and permanent deployment of Israeli forces along the Jordan valley.

In his speech earlier in the week, Obama did not deviate much from Netanyahu's positions. He declared that all peoples in the Middle East deserve support against their brutal dictators—except for the Palestinians, whose tormentor is Israel. All people deserve to live in freedom, democracy, and dignity, and have their will respected by the world, except for the Palestinians—if they elect representatives who are hostile to Israel's interests, they should be punished and made to pay a heavy price by the U.S. and the international community.

Obama further lectured the Palestinians on not delegitimizing a state that is based on

ethnic, racial, and religious superiority, echoing Netanyahu's call for the victims of Zionism to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, thus not only prejudicing the rights of the Palestinian Diaspora but also trampling over the rights of all non-Jewish Arabs in Israel itself.

How would Obama have reacted to a call for a "White State" for "the white people" in apartheid South Africa? In fact, he opposed such a preposterous proposition and delegitimized its proponents during his youth in the 1980s.

But if anything, the spring of Arab revolutions has shown that the Arab youth have regained the initiative. Israel can no longer dictate to a few Arab autocrats to impose its will on the region. Obama was correct to observe that time is not on the side of Israel. But his positions favoring the Zionist state will not promote the cause of peace or the two-state solution.

As many American and Israeli experts including Noam Chomsky, Norman Finkelstein, John Mearsheimer, Cheryl Rosenberg, and Ilan Pappé have pointed out, the main obstacle to a fair settlement in the Middle East has been the U.S. policies in the region. In particular, they point to aggressive policies favoring Israel and antagonistic attitudes towards the Arab populations advanced by the U.S. Congress, which is greatly influenced by the Israeli lobby.

As people in the Middle East are liberated from the yoke of repression and dictatorship, and as they begin to enjoy the fruits of freedom and democracy, they will demand an end to the injustice and occupation inflicted on the Palestinians for decades. The U.S. policies towards the conflict are being exposed for what they really are: policies favoring Israeli violence, occupation, brutality, dispossession, and humiliation of Palestinians.

The weapons that kill Palestinians are made in the U.S. and paid for by the U.S. treasury. The funds that build the settlements that dispossess the Palestinians, and aid the settlers that daily brutalize them are sent by America. The vetoes that shield Israel from any enforcement of international law or condemnation of its war crimes and illegal acts are American. In short, the entity that perpetuates the suffering of the Palestinians and aids and abets the Israeli crimes perpetrated against them is the U.S. led and cheered on by the U.S. Congress.

Since 1967, American taxpayers have provided over \$178 Billion in direct military and economic aid to Israel plus tens of billions of dollars of unpaid loans, ultimately forgiven by Congress, to settle American Jewish colonists and Russian Jews in Palestinian lands. During the same period the U.S. has cast 42 vetoes in the United Nations Security Council to shield Israel from adhering to international law or to cover its war crimes. Successive administrations, Republican and Democrat alike, have given Israel the most advanced weaponry in American's arsenal- some even denied to its NATO allies, including some that have been internationally prohibited.

Thus, in due course, the masses in the Arab streets will turn their anger towards the U.S, the enabler of Israel; the source of so much suffering in their neighborhood. As many of these mass movements have employed non-violence as a strategy to achieve their goals, they will also demand that the U.S. change its policies and behavior towards them if it truly seeks friendly relations as it proclaims.

According to the U.S-Arab business council, by next year, U.S. trade with the Arab world will surpass \$100 billion, affecting more than one million American jobs. Moreover, about a quarter of U.S. energy consumption comes from the Middle East. Hundreds of billions of

dollars of Arab funds are invested in U.S. treasury bonds as well as the private sector.

If the true popular will is expressed by the Arab masses then a serious Boycott-Divestment-Sanction (BDS) will be directed towards the U.S. causing financial havoc in Wall Street as well as economic dislocation in Main Street. All members of Congress who support Israel will be declared enemies of peace, led by those who applaud Israeli prime ministers and vote to prolong the suffering and humiliation of the Palestinian people. They will not be welcome to set foot in any Arab or Muslim capital, since, according to international law, those who aid and abet war criminals are themselves war criminals.

Only when such a worldwide comprehensive BDS movement against the U.S. is launched will the Congress ultimately change course, as it is forced to listen to the American electorate, which would demand answers and call for just policies from their elected officials, many of whom have sold out their country's ideals for special interests.

It is high time that Obama and Congress recall the words of George Washington, who in his farewell address warned his countrymen and women against establishing an unhealthy relationship with a foreign country when he said, "A passionate attachment of one nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favorite nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter without adequate inducement or justification."

The prophecy of the first president can only be averted by universal strong BDS action to sober up the U.S. Congress drunk from the coffers of the Israeli lobby.

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