

# Obama's Visit and Israel's Penchant for Conflict

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President Barack Obama's visit to the Middle East has coincided with the 10th anniversary of the killing of American peace activist Rachel Corrie. She was murdered by an American-made and financed Israeli bulldozer on March 16, 2003. It is unlikely the President or any in his entourage will remember the young American citizen, but according to the Israeli Ambassador, his government plans to broach the subject of convicted Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard.

As part of his "listening" tour, Obama must pay homage to the choreographed Hall of Remembrance at Yad Vashemm honouring the victims of European Holocaust. For contemporary suffering, from Yad Vashemm the President should peek across the prairie for traces of Deir Yassin's massacre or take a five-mile detour to a Palestinian refugee camp, a living museum and breathing testament of Israeli malevolence. While this deserving tribute is doubtful, in his helicopter ride to Bethlehem and Ramallah, Obama can't miss the Jewish-only colonies raping the virgin hills of the West Bank or the separation wall suffocating Palestinians.

Israeli firsters in Washington have marketed the trip as a must for the US President to win over sceptic Israeli public opinion. David Miller, an Israel-first ex-US official, faulted the Obama Administration for not showing adequate understanding of Israeli "fears". Another Israeli firster Dennis Ross, who was Obama's point man on the Middle East for most of his first term, advised him to take this opportunity "to connect with the Israeli psyche". This may seem like a daunting task.

According to a recent poll conducted by the Maagar Mohot Institute and Maarive newspaper, only 10 per cent of Israelis view the US President favourably. In fact, October 2012 opinion survey showed Israelis would have elected Mitt Romney over Obama by 57 to 22.

Leading to the trip, the President met separately representatives of American Arab and Jewish communities. While Arab American delegates urged the President to take this opportunity to advance peace negotiations, Jewish leaders counselled the President to hold off on any peace initiative. They cautioned that Israelis would "bristle" if Obama challenged them to take "hard steps" for peace. Ironically, the same crowd wanted him to be firm and alacritous to do whatever needed to halt Iran's nuclear ambition. In other words, Israeli firsters want conflict not peace to dominate the President's agenda.

This is an exact repeat of the strategy Israeli Prime Minister Isaac Shamir used 20 years ago,

eventually dragging the US into war with Iraq. Israel was false on Iraq then and has been proven to be wrong on Iran for the last 20 years. As early as 1992 Netanyahu suggested for the US to lead an “international front” to pre-empt Iran from becoming a nuclear power in “three to five years”. In the same year, then Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres told French TV that Iran was destined to acquire nuclear warhead capabilities by 1999. In 1995 an Israeli leak in the New York Times predicted Iran would assemble a nuclear bomb by 2000. The most recent assertion was made last September at the UN General Assembly in a hilarious cartoon illustration presented by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claiming that Iran was six months away from producing enough material for a nuclear bomb.

When the President speaks at the International Convention Centre in Jerusalem to declare his commitment for an ethno centric racist state and vowing to protect the “Jewish state” from specious nuclear threat, he must not forget that a nuclear Middle East was born in Israel, not Iraq nor Iran. Mr President, if you want Israelis to like you, just ask your predecessor how he turned the biggest government surplus into the largest deficit.

Sadly Obama was sold on what seemed to be a psychiatrist perverted notion that to promote peace he must first pledge US force for another Middle Eastern adventure. As such, the US President’s retinue should consider replacing policy experts with psychoanalysts to treat the Israeli penchant for conflict and diagnose its collective Katharophobia or fear of peace.

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