

Pro-Israeli Lobby Threatens British Government Over Illegal Settlement Vote at the UN

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The powerful pro-Israel Zionist lobby in Britain, which wields money and influence within parliament, is threatening to bring down the entire Conservative-led government over an escalating row which has been simmering for weeks, long before last week's Israeli Embassy scandal erupted. Zionist support for Israel has often led to accusations of political manipulation inside the British government and the accusations were apparently vindicated when an embassy official was caught on camera plotting to "take down" MPs who are vocal in their support of Palestine.

However, it has now emerged that while the diplomatic spat between the Israeli Embassy and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has been played out in banner headlines across the front pages, a far more sinister row has been brewing behind the scenes over the British government's support for UN Security Council Resolution 2334, which condemned Israel's illegal settlements. In a copy of a redacted email and other material seen by *MEMO*, a direct threat was made to the chair of Conservative Friends of Israel, Sir Eric Pickles MP, from one of the most senior figures in the Zionist lobby. The email delivers a blunt message: Prime Minister Theresa May and Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson should be "made to understand that Jewish support for the Conservative Party at the next General Election is at risk."

The explosive threat was sent to Pickles and copied in to Lord (Stuart) Polak, a long-term Conservative Friends of Israel director who was given a peerage in 2015. He stood down from his CFI role ahead of his appointment to the House of Lords.

With the bold header of "UNSC Resolution 2334", the email's author — whose identity is not known by *MEMO* — wanted to record his "utter dismay" at the British government's decision to support the resolution, which was passed just before Christmas. The author, whose name is redacted from the email shown to *MEMO*, lays the blame entirely at the feet of May and Johnson. "This Resolution does much more than merely restate previous policy positions of the UK government in relation to Israel and the Palestinian Arabs. It labels Jewish holy places - including the Temple Mount and the Western Wall — as existing on 'occupied Palestinian territory.' In demanding that Israel return to the 1949 armistice lines the resolution imperils the right of Jewish worship in these places, from which - as you know — Jews were barred between 1948 and 1967."

The writer expresses regret to have to say that British support for 2334 must call into question the sincerity of the recent statement by Mrs May's government on 12 December 2016 apparently evincing support for the Jewish state. The writer understands that CFI is writing to the prime minister and seeking an urgent meeting with Johnson. "These steps," the email continues, "are necessary but insufficient. Mrs May and Mr Johnson must be

persuaded to apologise to the Jewish people for their failure to veto 2334. If they do not do so, they must be made to understand that Jewish support for the Conservative Party at the next General Election is at risk.”

Details of this email and other correspondence from within the British Board of Deputies of British Jews, the UK Zionist Federation and the Jewish Leadership Council, clearly threaten to destroy the Tory vote at the next General Election in areas where Jewish voting influence has a major impact, such as Glasgow, Manchester and parts of North West London.

The move prompted an urgent meeting with Tobias Ellwood, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, on Wednesday. While the MP attempted to appease Jonathan Arkush, President of the Board of Deputies, demands were made for face-to-face meetings with May and Johnson.

After the meeting, Ellwood issued what many saw as a placatory statement which read: “While I reiterated the government’s continued belief that settlement building is illegal, I was clear that it is far from the only obstacle to peace and the international community must not forget this. The government is unwavering in its commitment to Israel’s security and we will continue to call out the scourge of Palestinian incitement and terrorism that blights the lives of ordinary Israelis.” Naturally, he made no mention of the brutality of Israel’s military occupation and how that “blights” the lives of all Palestinians.

Following his meeting with Ellwood, Arkush also issued a statement condemning British support for 2334. Around the same time, similar statements were issued by the United Synagogue and the Federation of Synagogues. United Synagogue President Stephen Pack urged his congregation to write to their local MPs.

Days earlier a [rally of around 300 pro-Israel supporters](#) was held by leading Zionist groups outside the Houses of Parliament in Westminster to add to the pressure on the government.

According to Jewish historian and political analyst Professor Geoffrey Alderman, “In obsessing over an Al-Jazeera scam involving a minor figure reportedly employed by the Israeli Foreign Ministry the press has been following the wrong story. The real action has involved the quite legitimate activities of UK-based Jewish lobbies and Jewish voters. Once UNSC Resolution 2334 had been passed, Conservative Friends of Israel swung into action, using its influence to demand a meeting with Tory foreign minister Boris Johnson.”

He pointed out that the Jewish community in Britain is small – less than 350,000 — but is concentrated in London, South Hertfordshire and Manchester. “Ever since the days of Maggie Thatcher the Jewish vote has been predominantly Conservative. Any mass abstention by Jewish voters would place several Tory-held seats in jeopardy.”

You would have to go back to the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War in October 1973 to find a similar level of anger amongst Jewish voters, he explained. At that time the anger was directed at the Tory embargo on arms shipments to Israel. “We can assume that Ellwood’s 11 January [statement](#) condemning Palestinian terrorism was a late attempt to placate this lobby.”

Alderman, a Professor of Politics and Contemporary History at the University of Buckingham, has authored several books, including *The Jewish Community in British Politics* and *British Jewry Since Emancipation*. He says that he is neither a member nor supporter of the

Conservative Party or Conservative Friends of Israel.

The high profile involvement of the Board of Deputies was criticised severely by Mick Napier, a co-founder of Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign. “The current Zionist leadership of the Board of Deputies of British Jews is more committed to promoting the interests of the Israeli State against the Palestinian people than in furthering any legitimate collective concerns of a group of British citizens. Given that Israel’s settlement building project is a war crime, efforts to align British Jews with such criminality is a reckless and dangerous campaign.”

In the meantime, it has emerged that Israeli diplomats in London issued a warning several months ago that attempts to “operate” British Jewish organisations from Jerusalem could be unlawful. This was long before the Al-Jazeera exposé of the embassy official talking about “taking down” MPs and setting up pro-Israel political groups in British.

“The strategic affairs ministry must understand that ‘operating’ organisations directly from Jerusalem by email and telephone isn’t good for their health,” warned a cable from the embassy in London. “It’s not clear that the strategic affairs ministry understand the local law with regards to the activities of charities.”

The Al-Jazeera documentary, some contents of which were leaked in advance, was actually broadcast on Wednesday. Shai Masot, the official at the centre of the Israeli embassy storm in London, was caught in an undercover sting boasting about plans to “take down” MPs who he regarded as hostile to Israel. One of his targets was Foreign Office Minister Sir Alan Duncan. Israel’s ambassador to the UK, Australian-born Mark Regev, has already issued a grovelling apology to Duncan and said that the embassy considered the remarks “completely unacceptable”.

Described as a “senior political officer” on his business cards, the embassy denied that Masot was a diplomat; it is understood that he will return to Israel before the end of the month. As well as establishing what he has described as “several political support groups in the UK”, Masot claimed credit for persuading the British government to adopt procurement guidelines preventing local authorities and the NHS from boycotting Israeli goods.

The Labour Party and the SNP, along with a number of Conservative MPs, have called for a public inquiry to be launched into what some have described as an issue of “national security”. Others are said to be mystified by Theresa May’s apparent reluctance to take the matter further. This could be explained, however, with the emergence of this latest correspondence which fuels speculation that the prime minister is under pressure not to further anger the powerful Zionist lobby or alienate the Jewish vote.

All of this prompts further questions about how much influence the state of Israel has had on successive British governments and their policies. Anyone who cares anything for democracy in Westminster must have serious concerns about this.

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