

Barack Obama in Jerusalem

It is an honor to be here with you in Jerusalem, and I am so grateful for the welcome that I have received from the people of Israel. I bring with me the support of the American people, and the friendship that binds us together.

Those ties began only eleven minutes after Israeli independence, when the United States was the first nation to recognize the State of Israel.

Since then, we have built a friendship that advances our shared interests. Together, we share a commitment to security for our citizens and the stability of the Middle East and North Africa. Together, we share a focus on economic growth around the globe and together, we share a stake in the success of democracy.

I am aware that these are complicated times for both our nations. But when I look at young people within the United States, no matter how great the challenges are, their idealism, their energy, and their ambition always give me hope. And I see the same spirit in the young people here today. And given the ties between our countries, I believe your future is bound to ours.

I'd like to focus today on how we can work together to make progress in three areas that will define our times: security, peace, and prosperity.

I will begin with security. I am proud that the security relationship between the United States and Israel has never been stronger. We have made it clear, time and again, that Israel cannot accept rocket attacks from Gaza and we have stood up for Israel's right to defend itself.

The question is what kind of future Israel will look forward to, and that brings me to the subject of peace.

Peace is necessary. Indeed, it is the only path to true security, and security must be at the center of any agreement. But there is no question that the only path to peace is through negotiation: the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and justice must also be recognized. Just as Israelis built a state in their homeland, Palestinians have a right to be a free people in their own land.

Of course, Israel cannot be expected to negotiate with anyone who is dedicated to its destruction. But while I know you have had differences with the Palestinian Authority, I believe that you do have a true partner in President Abbas, and many Palestinians have rejected violence as a means of achieving their aims.

And remember that as you make these decisions, you will define not simply the future of your relationship with the Palestinians, you will define the future of Israel as well.

Negotiations will be necessary. Palestinians must recognize that Israel will be a Jewish state, and that Israelis have the right to insist upon their security and Israelis must recognize that continued settlements is counterproductive to the cause of peace.

There are those who say that this change is not possible. But remember this: Israel is the most powerful country in this region. Israel has the support of the most powerful country in the

world. Israel has the wisdom to see the world as it is and also the courage to see the world as it should be.

That brings me to the final area I will focus on: prosperity. Through talent and hard work, Israelis have put this small country at the forefront of the global economy. Israelis understand the value of education and Israelis understand the power of invention, and your universities educate engineers and inventors. That spirit has led to economic growth and human progress.

This is just as important to the relationship between the United States and Israel as our security cooperation: today the trade between our two countries is at 40 billion dollars each year. That is the kind of relationship that Israel should have with every country in the world.

Here, in this small strip of land that has been the center of so much tragedy and triumph, Israelis have built something that few could imagine sixty-five years ago. Tomorrow, I will visit the Holocaust Memorial, where the world is reminded of the cloud of evil that can descend on the Jewish people and all of humanity if we fail to remain vigilant.

We bear that history on our shoulders, and we carry it in our hearts. Today, you – the young people of Israel – must now claim the future.

As the President of a country that you can count on as your greatest friend, I am confident that you can help us find the promise in the days that lie ahead. And as a man who has been inspired in my own life by that timeless calling within the Jewish experience, I am hopeful that we can draw upon what's best in ourselves to meet the challenges that will come; to win the battles for peace in the wake of so much war; and to do the work of repairing this world.

May God bless you, and may God bless Israel and the United States of America. Toda raba.