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Israel 'expects' Obama to win

Looks to create defensible borders before pressured into concessions

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By Aaron Klein

WorldNetDaily

JERUSALEM – The Israeli government estimates Sen. Barack Obama will win the presidential elections and is rushing to finalize a deal with the Palestinians and possibly Syria before President Bush leaves office, two top Israeli diplomats told WND.

The diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Israel is seeking to create "defensible borders" within months, fearing if territorial negotiations were held during an Obama administration, Israel would be pressured into more dangerous concessions.

"Israel must ensure defensible borders before Obama is elected," said one Israeli diplomat. "The [Israeli] leadership is motivated by many factors but one of them is a drive to conclude a deal for a Palestinian state and talks with Syria before the likely event of an Obama administration."

The other diplomat said Jerusalem is concerned by what he called Obama's "questionable" support of Israel:

"Look, there's no doubt [Prime Minister Ehud] Olmert is rushing into talks with Syria and looking to create a Palestinian state, at least on paper, by January due to the criminal probe against him. But it is understood Israel will get a better deal and can ensure its security better with Bush in office instead of Obama. [Obama's] support of Israel is questionable. We fear he is unfriendly," said the diplomat.

(Story continues below)



Sen. Barack Obama, D-Illinois



Olmert's government has been holding intense negotiations with the Palestinians the past few months following last November's U.S.-sponsored Annapolis summit which seeks to create a Palestinian state by the end of the year. It is widely assumed Israel will attempt to hand the Palestinians most of the West Bank and eastern sections of Jerusalem in any deal.

Also last week, both the Syrian government and Olmert's office announced Israel and Syria are holding indirect talks about a deal in which Israel would be expected to evacuate the Golan Heights, which looks down on Israeli population centers and was twice used by Syria to mount ground invasions into the Jewish state.

Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Moallem claimed Olmert agreed to withdraw from the entire Golan in advance of the indirect talks, while Olmert's office would only say it is in negotiations with Syria but would not comment on any preconditions or advance offers.

It is widely believed here Olmert is engaging in talks with Syria due to his implication in what is being described as a very serious criminal investigation.

Politicians from across the political spectrum – including member's of Olmert's own Kadima party and other leftist Knesset members who support talks with Syria – have been quoted by the Israeli media in recent days tying the Syria talks to the investigation of Olmert.

Last week, a poll conducted by Israel's Channel 2 found 57 percent of Israelis believe the timing of the negotiations with Syria is linked to the corruption case against Olmert. Fifty-eight percent of those polled reportedly said Israel's leader did not have the legitimacy to negotiate with Syria.

Olmert has said he would resign if he is indicted in the probe, which focuses on alleged bribes he took in exchange for political favors.

The Israeli diplomats speaking to WND today agreed with the estimation Olmert is in dialogue with Syria because of the criminal investigation, but they said another major factor was the prospect of an Obama's presidency.

"Putting Syria aside, Bush is seen as the best chance for Israel to get a deal with the Palestinians that would have better security guarantees," said one diplomat. "Frankly, we don't think Obama will favor

Israeli security needs as much."

Asked how an Israeli evacuation of the West Bank or Jerusalem neighborhoods under any circumstances would advance Israel's security, the diplomat replied: "We are talking about whether Israel would retain certain settlement blocks and other security guarantees, like some sort of Israeli monitoring mechanism in Palestinian areas. Also, U.S. security guarantees."

Obama questioned over ties to Palestinian activist

Obama has been assailed over his stated commitment to Israel, although he has repeatedly insisted during interviews he is a strong supporter of the Jewish state.

At a Boca Raton, Fla., synagogue last week, participants in a panel discussion quizzed Obama about his relationship with Columbia University Professor Rashid Khalidi, a pro-Palestinian activist and harsh critic of Israel who has been described as a friend of the senator.

Obama replied: "You mentioned Rashid Khalidi, who's a professor at Columbia. I do know him, because I taught at the University of Chicago. And he is Palestinian. And I do know him, and I have had conversations. He is not one of my advisers; he's not one of my foreign policy people. His kids went to the Lab school where my kids go as well. He is a respected scholar, although he vehemently disagrees with a lot of Israel's policy."

Khalidi's ties to Obama were first exposed by WND in February in a widely cited article.

According to a professor at the University of Chicago who said he has known Obama for 12 years, the Democratic presidential hopeful befriended Khalidi when the two worked together at the university. The professor spoke on condition of anonymity. Khalidi lectured at the University of Chicago until 2003 while Obama taught law there from 1993 until his election to the Senate in 2004.

Sources at the university told WND that Khalidi and Obama lived in nearby faculty residential zones and that the two families dined together a number of times. The sources said the Obamas even babysat the Khalidi children.

Khalidi in 2000 held what was described as a successful fundraiser for Obama's failed bid for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, a fact not denied by Khalidi, who spoke to WND in February.

As WND reported, an anti-Israel Arab group run by Khalidi's wife, Mona, received crucial funding from a Chicago nonprofit, the Woods Fund, for which Obama served as a board member.

When Khalidi departed the University of Chicago in 2003, Obama delivered an in-person testimonial at a farewell ceremony reminiscing about conversations over meals prepared by Mona Khalidi.

Earlier this month, WND noted Obama termed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict a "constant sore" in an interview just five days after Khalidi wrote an opinion piece in the Nation magazine in which he called the "Palestinian question" a "running sore."

In his piece, "Palestine: Liberation Deferred," Khalidi suggests Israel carried out "ethnic cleansing" of Palestinians; writes Western powers backed Israel's establishment due to guilt of the Holocaust; laments the Palestinian Authority's stated acceptance of a Palestinian state "only" in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and eastern sections of Jerusalem; and argues Israel should be dissolved and instead a binational, cantonal system should be set up in which Jews and Arabs reside.

During documented speeches and public events, Khalidi has called Israel an "apartheid system in creation" and a destructive "racist" state.

He has multiple times implied support for Palestinian terror, calling suicide bombings a response to "Israeli aggression." He dedicated his 1986 book, "Under Siege," to "those who gave their lives ... in defense of the cause of Palestine and independence of Lebanon."

Critics assailed the book as excusing Palestinian terrorism and claim the dedication is in reference to the Palestine Liberation Organization, which at that time committed scores of anti-Western attacks and was labeled by the U.S. as a terrorist group.

Top Obama adviser: NYC, Miami Jews the problem

Obama also came under fire last week for comments made by Merrill A. McPeak, Obama's military adviser and national campaign co-chairman, in which he implied U.S. politicians are afraid of Jewish voters in Miami and New York City and that American Jews are the "problem" impeding a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Republican Jewish Coalition last week took out ads in top Florida newspapers petitioning Jews in the Sunshine State to question Obama over McPeak's remarks, which were highlighted in March by WND.

McPeak was asked during a 2003 interview with the Oregonian newspaper whether the problem in solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict originated with the White House or the State Department.

"So where's the problem?" the interviewer asked.

McPeak replied, "New York City. Miami. We have a large vote – vote, here in favor of Israel. And no politician wants to run against it."

McPeak went on to insist that to solve the conflict, Israelis must "stop settling the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and maybe even withdraw some of the settlements that've already been put there. And nobody wants to take on that problem. It's just too tough politically."

Obama adviser: Divide Jerusalem!

Much concern has also been expressed about Obama's top Middle East adviser, Daniel Kurtzer, who has long been seen as one of Israel's greatest foes in Washington.

Earlier this month, Kurtzer stressed Jerusalem must be included in any negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Kurtzer, a former U.S. ambassador to Israel, has been identified by Israeli leaders, including prime ministers, as biased against Israel and is notorious for urging extreme concessions from the Jewish state. He was appointed as a primary Obama adviser on the Middle East earlier this year.

Obama's appointment of Kurtzer raised eyebrows among the pro-Israel Jewish community.

"We oppose the appointment of Kurtzer because of his long, documented record of hostility to and severe pressure upon Israel," said Zionist Organization of America National Chairman Morton Klein.

Kurtzer has been blasted by mainstream Jewish organizations, including the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

He has angered Israeli leaders many times for pushing Israel into what they described as extreme concessions to the Palestinians.

"With Jews like Kurtzer, it is impossible to build a healthy relationship between Israel and the United States," Benjamin Nentanyahu was quoted saying in 2001 by Israel's Haaretz newspaper.

Former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said Kurtzer "frequently pressured Israel to make one-sided concessions to the Arabs; he constantly blamed Israel for the absence of Mideast peace, and paid little or no attention to the fact that the Palestinians were carrying out terrorist attacks and openly calling for the destruction of Israel."

Morris Amitay, former executive director of the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in 2001: "Kurtzer ... will use his Jewishness as a protective cover for his anti-Israel views."

The ZOA points out Israel's leading daily, Yediot Ahronot, editorialized on Kurtzer's negative influence against Israel:

"Possibly more than any other U.S. State Department official, Kurtzer has been instrumental in promoting the goals of the Palestinians and in raising their afflictions to the center of the U.S. policymakers' agenda," the paper stated.

Kurtzer first rose to prominence in 1988 when, as a State Department adviser, he counseled the Reagan administration to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization led by Yasser Arafat. The PLO had carried out scores of anti-Western attacks, but in the late '80s Arafat claimed to have renounced violence.

In 1988, Kurtzer was noted as the principal author of a major policy speech by then-Secretary of State George Shultz in which the U.S. government first recognized the "legitimate rights" of the Palestinians.

Haaretz reported in 2001 that Kurtzer had a "vocal conflict" with an Israeli government official in Philadelphia in the summer of 1990 after Kurtzer "attacked the Israeli government for refusing to include the PLO in the peace process [and] said that this constituted the main obstacle to peace."

Hamas: 'We like Obama'

Underscoring fears of Obama's commitment to Israel, the Hamas terror group's purported endorsement of the Illinois senator has become a central campaign theme and has been highlighted by the news media worldwide.

Hamas' chief political adviser in the Gaza Strip, Ahmed Yousef, said in a now notorious interview last month with WND and with WABC Radio that he "hopes" Obama becomes president.

"We like Mr. Obama, and we hope that he will win the elections," said Yousef. "I hope Mr. Obama and the Democrats will change the political discourse. ... I do believe [Obama] is like John Kennedy, a great man with a great principal. And he has a vision to change America to make it in a position to lead the world community, but not with humiliation and arrogance," Yousef said, speaking from Gaza.

Obama has repeatedly condemned Hamas as a terrorist organization that should be isolated until it renounces violence and recognizes Israel.

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