



President Obama's Stance on Israel: **Myths vs. Facts**

Myth: President Obama is pressuring Israel more than he is pressuring the Palestinians

Fact: President Obama has strongly objected to Palestinian plans to unilaterally declare statehood, condemned Palestinian incitement against Israel, and demanded that Hamas forgo violence and recognize Israel.

- President Obama has strongly objected to Palestinian efforts to unilaterally seek statehood recognition through the United Nations: "Efforts to delegitimize Israel will end in failure [and] symbolic actions to isolate Israel at the United Nations in September won't create an independent state."¹
- The Obama administration has repeatedly condemned instances of Palestinian incitement against Jews and Israel: "We have repeatedly raised with the Palestinian Authority leadership the need to consistently combat all forms of de-legitimization of Israel including denying historic Jewish connections to the land."²
- President Obama has repeatedly demanded that Hamas, a terrorist organization, forgo violence, honor previous agreements, and recognize Israel before being considered a potential partner in negotiations.³ He has supported Israel's refusal to negotiate with a Palestinian government that does not meet these conditions.⁴

Myth: President Obama has put forward parameters that weaken the Israeli negotiating position including forcing Israel to return to the indefensible 1967 lines

Fact: President Obama insisted that the future border accommodate Israel's security and demographic concerns; he conditioned any Israeli withdrawal from post-1967 territory on effectiveness of security arrangements.

- In his May 19 speech at the State Department⁵ and May 22 speech to the AIPAC annual policy conference, President Obama insisted that Israel *not* be required to return to the 1967 lines, and that any future border accommodate Israel's security and demographic concerns: "The parties themselves -- Israelis and Palestinians -- will negotiate a border that is different than the one that existed on June 4, 1967."⁶
- The formulation of 1967 lines with agreed territorial swaps has been the working assumption of every U.S. president and secretary of state since the 2000 Camp David negotiations, as well as former Israeli Prime Ministers Ehud Olmert and Ehud Barak, Israel's most decorated soldier.⁷

¹ Remarks by the President, [5/19/2011](#).

² E.g. Jerusalem Post, [11/30/2010](#); Remarks by the President, [5/19/2011](#); Briefing by Press Secretary Carney, [5/20/2011](#).

³ E.g. Readout of President Obama's Meeting with PM Netanyahu, [7/6/2010](#); Remarks by the President, [5/20/2010](#).

⁴ Remarks by the President, [07/06/2010](#).

⁵ Remarks by the President, [5/19/2011](#).

⁶ PBS, [5/24/2011](#).

⁷ WSJ, [5/23/2011](#).

- President Obama's speeches clearly supported the importance of Israeli security in any peace deal: "Every state has the right to self-defense, and Israel must be able to defend itself -- by itself -- against any threat," President Obama said.⁸
- President Obama called for a non-militarized Palestinian state and stated that "the full and phased withdrawal of Israeli military forces should be coordinated with the assumption of Palestinian security responsibility in a sovereign, non-militarized state. And the duration of this transition period must be agreed, and the effectiveness of security arrangements must be demonstrated."⁹

Myth: Obama is forcing Israel to give up Jerusalem or the Western Wall

Fact: President Obama has not made declarative statements about the final status of Jerusalem and he has repeated that resolution of the core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be reached through direct bilateral negotiations between the two parties.

- President Obama believes that "it is up to the Israelis and Palestinians to take action. No peace can be imposed upon them -- not by the United States; not by anybody else."¹⁰
- Obama recognizes the importance of Jerusalem to the Jewish state and during his AIPAC speech said, "When I touched my hand against the Western Wall and placed my prayer between its ancient stones, I thought of all the centuries that the children of Israel had longed to return to their ancient homeland."¹¹

Myth: Obama is soft on Hamas

Fact: President Obama has repeatedly spoken out forcefully to condemn Hamas.

- "It is a sign neither of courage nor power to shoot rockets at sleeping children, or to blow up old women on a bus. That's not how moral authority is claimed; that's how it is surrendered."¹²
- "The slaughter of innocent Israelis is not resistance—it's injustice."¹³
- "Palestinian leaders will not achieve peace or prosperity if Hamas insists on a path of terror and rejection."¹⁴
- "No country can be expected to negotiate with a terrorist organization sworn to its destruction. And we will continue to demand that Hamas accept the basic responsibilities of peace, including recognizing Israel's right to exist and rejecting violence and adhering to all existing agreements..."¹⁵

Myth: Obama is not doing enough to prevent a nuclear Iran, the largest threat to Israel's security

⁸ Remarks by the President, [5/19/2011](#).

⁹ Remarks by the President, [5/19/2011](#).

¹⁰ Remarks by the President, [5/19/2011](#).

¹¹ Remarks by the President, [5/22/2011](#).

¹² Remarks by the President, [6/4/2009](#).

¹³ Remarks by the President, [9/22/2010](#).

¹⁴ Remarks by the President, [5/19/2011](#).

¹⁵ Remarks by the President, [5/22/2011](#).

Fact: President Obama is determined to prevent a nuclear Iran and signed into law the toughest sanctions against Iran; Obama was praised by Netanyahu for his work.

- President Obama is determined to prevent a nuclear Iran. Because of his efforts to form an international coalition of partners including China and Russia, the United Nations Security Council passed the most comprehensive and biting international sanctions Iran has ever faced.¹⁶
- In addition to multilateral sanctions, President Obama worked with Congress to pass the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act, the most far-reaching package of American sanctions against Iran, which makes it harder for the Iranian government to buy refined petroleum and the goods it needs to modernize its oil and gas sector. Already close to \$60 billion in energy-related projects in Iran have been put on hold or discontinued.¹⁷
- President Obama has also reinstituted sanctions against Iran-allied Syria and strongly condemned Syria's transfer of arms to Hezbollah, Iran's proxy in Lebanon.¹⁸
- Prime Minister Netanyahu praised President Obama in his speech to Congress for President Obama's hard-nosed efforts to prevent Iranian nuclearization and for defending Israel's right to protect itself against Iranian proxies: "President Obama has said that the U.S. is determined to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. The president successfully led the Security Council at the UN to adopt sanctions against Iran."¹⁹
- "A series of U.S. and international sanctions imposed over the past year have slowly undermined Iran's ability to conduct trade by targeting the country's access to international banking, insurers and transportation companies... At the same time, the United States has backed international efforts to lower global petroleum prices, bringing the collateral benefit of stripping Iran of revenue that it has used to offset the economic costs of sanctions... The sanctions are having unparalleled success in creating significant hardships for key Iranian industries. The impact of the sanctions on banking and transportation companies will be immediate and prolonged."²⁰

Myth: Obama is naive and does not understand the threats that Israel faces

Fact: President Obama recognizes, and has spoken about, the seriousness of Israeli's security concerns and has backed up that concern with significant American investment and involvement in Israeli security.

- President Obama recognizes Israel's very real threats in the region and has continually referred to America's "unshakable" commitment to Israel's security.²¹
- In an NPR interview Obama said, "I would say that given past statements surrounding Israel—the notion that they should be driven into the sea, that they should be annihilated, that they should be obliterated—the armed aggression that's been directed toward them in the past—you can understand why not only Israelis

¹⁶ [White House.gov](http://WhiteHouse.gov); Washington Post, [6/10/2010](#);

¹⁷ [White House.gov](http://WhiteHouse.gov); Reuters, [7/1/10](#).

¹⁸ New York Times, [5/19/11](#); The Telegraph, [4/20/10](#)

¹⁹ Washington Post, [5/24/11](#).

²⁰ New York Times, [7/10/11](#).

²¹ Remarks by the President, [6/4/09](#); Remarks by the President, [5/19/11](#)

would feel concerned, but the United States would feel it was important to back this stalwart ally.”²²

- Under the Obama administration, Israel continues to stand as the leading beneficiary of U.S. Foreign Military Financing program security assistance funds for military training and equipment—accounting for over 50 percent of US FMF program funding, more than the total program funding provided to some 70 other countries combined.
- Despite tough fiscal times, President Obama fought for and secured full funding for Israel in the FY 2011 appropriation bill, which includes \$3 billion in Foreign Military Financing—the largest amount of funding for Israel in U.S. history.
- In late 2009, more than 1,000 U.S. and Israeli troops participated in the largest-ever U.S.-Israel military exercise Juniper Cobra.²³
- Israeli forces have been granted access to advanced U.S. military hardware (such as the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter), emergency stockpiles, and free or discounted equipment.²⁴
- President Obama secured an additional \$205 million to help produce an Israeli-developed short-range rocket defense system, the Iron Dome, which has recently helped defend Israeli communities against rocket attacks.²⁵
- Prime Minister Netanyahu thanked President Obama in his speech to Congress for being “very generous in giving us tools to do the job of defending Israel on our own... [and] for your steadfast commitment to Israel's security. I know economic times are tough. I deeply appreciate this.”²⁶
- The Obama administration has expanded bilateral security consultations and cooperation in an unprecedented manner on a wide range of shared security challenges, from counterterrorism and preventing illicit arms smuggling into Gaza to counter-proliferation.²⁷

Myth: President Obama has not been vocal enough about his support for Israel in the United Nations

Fact: President Obama has continually placed its support behind Israel through numerous UN actions.

- Despite strong international pressure, President Obama vetoed the 2010 Security Council resolution condemning Israel’s settlement construction – making the US the only country on the 15-member Security Council not to support the resolution.²⁸
- The Obama administration has voted against – and was often alone in doing so – seven anti-Israel resolutions at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.²⁹

²² NPR, [6/1/09](#).

²³ CNN, [10/21/09](#)

²⁴ Reuters, [10/8/10](#); UPI, [1/19/10](#)

²⁵ Washington Times, [08/29/11](#); Associated Press, [4/16/11](#)

²⁶ Washington Post, [5/24/11](#).

²⁷ Brookings Saban Center, [7/16/10](#).

²⁸ UN News Centre, [2/18/11](#).

²⁹ UN Watch, Accessed [07/16/11](#).

- The Administration believes the structural bias against Israel – including a standing agenda item for Israel, whereas all other countries are treated under a common item – is wrong³⁰.
- The Obama administration condemned the Goldstone report on the Gaza conflict as “unbalanced, one-sided and basically unacceptable,” pointing to serious concerns with its recommendations.³¹ The Obama administration lobbied heavily against the Goldstone report advancing beyond the Human Rights Council.³²
- The Obama administration expressed its solidarity with Israel in the aftermath of the Gaza flotilla incident,³³ working behind the scenes to ensure a more balanced statement by the UN Security Council, one that included embracing Israel’s own independent inquiry into the raid.³⁴
- The Obama administration launched a study of Palestinian, Saudi, and Israeli textbooks to identify and counter possible bias...³⁵

Myth: If President Obama really cares about Israel he would go visit

Fact: President Obama has met with Prime Minister Netanyahu seven times since taking office, dispatched numerous senior administration officials, and visited Israel twice prior to becoming President.

- President Obama and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have met seven times since Netanyahu took office. These meetings, together with frequent phone calls and extensive consultations, are a reflection of the extraordinary bonds between our two countries. In fact, Obama spent over 90 minutes with Netanyahu on the day of Obama’s largest domestic policy achievement, health care reform.³⁶
- Senior Obama administration officials have visited Israel, including Vice President Joe Biden,³⁷ Secretary of State Hillary Clinton,³⁸ then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates,³⁹ then-national Security Advisor James Jones,⁴⁰ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mike Mullen⁴¹ and others.
- During the presidential campaign in 2008 Obama visited Israel for a second time, and stated in Sderot, “I bring to Sderot an unshakable commitment to Israel’s security. The state of Israel faces determined enemies who seek its destruction. But it also has a friend and ally in the United States that will always stand by the people of Israel.”⁴²
- The only two US presidents to make an official state visit to Israel during their first term were Presidents Carter and Clinton.

³⁰ JPost, [2/28/11](#).

³¹ NJDC, [10/28/09](#).

³² Washington Post, [9/18/09](#) ; Reuters, [4/6/11](#).

³³ Fox News, [6/13/2010](#).

³⁴ BBC, [6/1/2010](#); Telegraph, [7/12/11](#)

³⁵ JTA, [7/7/2011](#).

³⁶ PBS, [05/20/11](#)

³⁷ Reuters, [03/08/10](#).

³⁸ BBC, [3/3/09](#)

³⁹ Business Insider, [3/24/2011](#).

⁴⁰ NJDC, [2/1/2010](#).

⁴¹ Politico, [02/12/10](#).

⁴² NYT, [7/23/08](#).

Myth: President Obama believes that Israel is at the root of all problems in the Middle East today

Fact: President Obama declared Israel a source of inspiration for the American people as the sole true democracy in the Middle East.

- President Obama stated in 2009 that “[Israel] is a stalwart ally of the United States. We have historical ties, emotional ties. As the only true democracy in the Middle East, it is a source of admiration and inspiration for the American people.”⁴³

Myth: President Obama snubbed Prime Minister Netanyahu during his first visit to the White House

Fact: Israeli Ambassador Oren refuted this, declaring President Obama a true friend to Israel.

- Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren has refuted this claim, saying that accounts of the March 23 meeting were distorted. David A. Harris, President Of the National Jewish Democratic Council, praised Oren’s remarks at a dinner for Tim Kaine hosted by Ambassador Oren in his home: “Ambassador Oren could not have been more clear during his remarks – President Obama is a true friend to Israel and the U.S. – Israel relationship remains rock solid....”⁴⁴

Myth: The Obama administration put Israel on a list of countries that sponsor terrorism

Fact: The US does not and never has considered Israel to have links to terrorism.

- John Morton, director of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement division of the department, said Israel's appearance on the Office of the Inspector General’s list of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement’s ‘Third Agency Checks’ was a mistake. “The addition of Israel to the list... was based on inaccurate information provided to [us] during the course of its audit. The US does not and never has considered Israel to have links to terrorism, but rather they are a partner in our efforts to combat global terrorism.”⁴⁵

⁴³ Remarks by President Obama, [5/18/2009](#).

⁴⁴ JTA, [5/6/2010](#).

⁴⁵ JTA, [7/6/2011](#).