



May 27, 2009

Obama's in Charge, Now Take Action Before Events Overtake Negotiations Analysis of the May 18, 2009, Obama – Netanyahu Meeting

Reading between the lines suggests that the May 18, 2009, White House meeting between President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu shifted the short-term balance of power to Obama. But a major, unexpected event may cause the United States and/or Israel to act impulsively to the detriment of a negotiated Israeli-Palestinian or Israeli-Arab peace agreement.

As expected, Obama repeated previous U.S. calls for a Palestinian state alongside Israel, an end to new and expanded settlements, and insisted that an Israeli-Palestinian peace would be an asset when dealing with Iran. As expected, Netanyahu did not agree to a Palestinian state, but he did call for an immediate resumption of negotiations. Obama said that diplomatic progress with Iran will be evaluated at the end of the year, but he did not set a time-table for halting Iran's nuclear program.

The private meeting between Obama and Netanyahu lasted about 50% longer than scheduled, and a joint written statement that was promised was not produced. These observations suggest that there was significant disagreement between Obama and Netanyahu. Combined with the summary of results above, we believe that Obama was not diverted from his goal of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by Netanyahu's argument to focus efforts on dealing with Iran prior to working on an Israeli-Palestinian agreement. The Jewish peace camp sees this as a positive step, if not a short-term victory.

In addition to Israeli foot-dragging, steady progress towards a Palestinian state and diplomacy with Iran could also be derailed by an unexpected, major event in the Middle East, where such events are almost predictable. Likely scenarios prompting a rash response include the assassination of an Arab leader or a sudden change in government in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, or Iraq). Our fear is that in reaction to such an event, leaders in the United States and/or Israel may act abruptly, perhaps to implement their hawkish agendas, and launch a military strike that would, in turn, trigger widespread military and political responses throughout the entire region.

In light of potential unforeseen events, **LA Jews for Peace**, and the entire Jewish Peace camp, demands the President Obama proceed with his proposal to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by taking concrete and immediate steps to bring about a just and durable peace based on U.N. resolutions, international law, and human rights. In other words, **stop stalling while people are suffering and dying**.