

Obama affirms “ironclad” support for Israel

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Wrapping up a week largely devoted to US policy towards the Middle East, President Barack Obama spoke Sunday before the right-wing Zionist lobby, the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), recommitting Washington to the unconditional defense of Israel.

Obama’s appearance before AIPAC came just three days after he delivered his so-called “Arab Spring” speech and two days after his White House meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Taken together, these three events have only served to confirm that, in the face of the historic popular upheavals that have toppled two decades-old dictatorships in Tunisia and Egypt and brought masses into the streets throughout much of the Arab world, Washington remains committed to a counterrevolutionary policy in the region anchored in its strategic alliance with Israel.

Media coverage of Obama’s speech and Netanyahu’s contemptuous reaction to it were both centered on one phrase uttered by the US president: “We believe the borders of Israel and Palestine should be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps...”

Netanyahu publicly rebuffed Obama, declaring at the White House that any return to such “lines” would leave Israel “indefensible.” The administration’s Republican opponents accused Obama of “throwing Israeli under the bus,” or stabbing it in the back.

Obama’s speech to AIPAC—a lobby which, despite its financial clout, represents the views of only a right-wing minority within Israel and even a smaller minority of Jewish people in the US—was designed to counter these accusations.

He declared that the “commitment of the United States to the security of Israel is ironclad,” a formulation designed to invoke Washington’s unceasing support for Israel aggression and slaughter of civilians. This includes the thousands killed in Lebanon

in 2006 and in Gaza in 2008-2009, as well as the routine, daily violence against Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Obama boasted that even as his administration and Republican and Democratic state governments across the US are taking a meat ax to vital social programs, hundreds of millions of dollars more can always be found to support Israel’s military.

“Despite tough fiscal times, we’ve increased foreign military financing to record levels,” Obama emphasized, pointing in particular to funding for Israel’s new “Iron Dome” anti-rocket system.

On the subject of his offending comment about “1967 lines,” Obama insisted, justifiably, that there “was nothing particularly original” in his proposal.

Obama emphasized that he had not proposed a return to those lines, but negotiations that would be based on “mutually agreed swaps” that would produce “a border that is different than the one that existed” before Israel’s occupation of Gaza, the West Bank, the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and the Sinai in 1967.

Any final settlement would have to take into account “the new demographic realities on the ground,” he said.

These “demographic realities”, an innocuous term that refers to the relentless theft of Palestinian land and building of Zionist settlements in the occupied territories, have effectively devoured 40 percent of what was the West Bank. The remaining territory has been left divided by Israel’s apartheid wall, settlements and security roads, making a mockery of Obama’s talk of “mutually agreed swaps” producing a viable, sovereign Palestinian state.

Glaringly absent from any of Obama’s statements over the past several days has been any suggestion that Israel should call a halt to the illegal settlement activity.

Washington’s policy is designed to facilitate an Israeli strategy that was bluntly described by Israel’s then-foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, in 2007: “The Israel

policy is to take more and more land day after day and at the end of the day, we'll say that it is impossible, we already have the land and we cannot create the [Palestinian] state."

The so-called "peace process" promoted once again by Obama is a two-decades-old diplomatic charade aimed at justifying Israel's crimes against the Palestinian people and facilitating Washington's foreign policy machinations throughout the Middle East.

This fraudulent process has been made possible thanks to the collaboration of a Palestinian bourgeois nationalist leadership, represented by the Palestinian Authority of Mahmoud Abbas, which has agreed to surrender every basic social and democratic aspiration of the Palestinian people in its bid to secure a state to defend the interests and privileges of a narrow Palestinian elite.

The attitude of the US toward Israel is bound up with the defense of the interests of the American ruling class throughout the region.

Behind the flowery rhetoric about "universal rights", "self-determination of the individual" and "transition to democracy," US imperialism is pursuing a counterrevolutionary strategy aimed at crushing the struggles of the masses of working people in the Middle East and North Africa and defending US imperialism's hegemonic domination of the region's strategic energy resources

To this end, it is waging through NATO a neocolonial war in Libya and backing the reactionary monarchical regimes in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States as they work to quell social upheavals in their own territories and in the broader region.

The US is pursuing this strategy in close collaboration with Israel which, together with Washington, was the most steadfast defender of the dictatorships of Mubarak in Egypt and Ben Ali in Tunisia until the moment of their downfall. In both of these countries, the US, aided by Israel, is working to suppress the revolutionary strivings of the masses and to solidify new regimes based on the military and the bourgeois "democrats" committed to defending the interests of foreign and domestic capital.

Obama's inability to propose anything "particularly original" to the peoples of Palestine, the Arab world and Israel itself is a measure of the historic decline of

American imperialism, which is capable only of preparing new wars and catastrophes.

As for Israel, Netanyahu's sharp reaction to Obama's speech is motivated in large part by the attempt to promote and continually whip up the most right-wing sections of the Israeli population. There is a perpetual fear of instability and political crisis in Israel, where inequality is higher than in most of the Middle Eastern countries hit by social upheavals this year.

The historic struggles that have swept the region for the past six months are fueled by the insoluble crisis of the world capitalist system, which will inevitably produce further eruptions in the rest of the Middle East, including in the occupied territories and Israel itself.

The most burning need is the building of a new revolutionary leadership based on the perspective of socialism and internationalism and committed to uniting Jewish and Arab workers in a common struggle against capitalism and for the creation of a democratic and secular state as part of a Socialist Federation of the Middle East.

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