

Obama talks “peace” in Israel while preparing war

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In a speech delivered in Jerusalem on Thursday, US President Barack Obama identified US interests unconditionally with Israel while reiterating war threats against both Syria and Iran.

The speech, delivered to several hundred Israeli university students, was ostensibly meant to signal Washington’s continued support for the so-called “peace process”—the moribund, decades-old diplomatic charade that has served as a cover for Israeli oppression of the Palestinian people and a means of promoting US objectives elsewhere in the Arab world.

The US administration chose this audience rather than the Knesset for fear that Obama would be heckled by the extreme right-wing Zionist elements that dominate the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Before appearing in Jerusalem, Obama made a brief side-trip by helicopter to Ramallah in the occupied West Bank, where he appeared at a press conference with Palestinian Authority (PA) chief Mahmoud Abbas.

Several hundred demonstrators took to the streets of Ramallah to denounce the visit, but were kept far from Abbas’ compound by a phalanx of PA police. Confronting the police, demonstrators began chants against Abbas, shouting “down with the military regime.”

While mouthing empty platitudes about the accelerating spread of Zionist settlements in the occupied West Bank not being “constructive,” Obama made no repeat of his 2009 demand for a freeze on settlement activity. Instead, he pressured the Palestinian Authority and Abbas to drop their own demand for such a freeze.

Obama argued that politics in Israel “are complex” and that the settlements were “not an issue that’s going to be solved immediately.” He chided the Palestinians for holding the view “that we can only have direct negotiations when everything is settled ahead of time, then there’s no point for negotiations.”

In reality, the so-called “two-state solution” has become

a dead letter, as Zionist settlements have already gobbled up nearly half of the land occupied by Israel in the 1967 war, which was supposedly to be the territory of a Palestinian mini-state. There are now 560,000 Israelis in this territory, 60,000 more than when Obama took office.

The *New York Times* reported Thursday on a document summing up Palestinian Authority “talking points” for the meeting with Obama that suggested Abbas and the corrupt wealthy clique he represents are prepared to bow even lower to the US and Israel.

The documents propose an agreement in which Netanyahu could “pledge to you secretly that he will stop settlement activities during the period of negotiations.”

Both the Israeli press and Palestinian analysts described Obama’s address to the Israeli students as the most enthusiastic embrace of the ideology of Zionism by any president in US history. One Israeli newspaper urged Obama to emigrate to Israel and run for office.

Obama first stressed Israel’s unconditional right to security—though no such security is on offer to the Palestinians of the West Bank or Gaza or neighboring countries like Lebanon, which have been subjected to repeated Israeli invasions and bombardments. Unlike these countries, Israel serves as a bulwark for US counter-revolutionary and neo-colonial operations in the region.

“The security relationship between the United States and Israel has never been stronger: more exercises between our militaries, and more exchanges among our political, military and intelligence officials than ever before; the largest program to date to help you retain your qualitative military edge,” Obama boasted. He announced that discussions were underway to extend for another decade the US military aid program that pours billions of dollars into the Israel Defense Forces every year.

Obama repeated a threat of military action against Syria made the day before during a joint appearance with Netanyahu.

“We will not tolerate the use of chemical weapons against the Syrian people or the transfer of these weapons to terrorists,” he said. “The world is watching, and we will hold you accountable.”

The overwhelming evidence indicates that a chemical weapon used on Tuesday, killing at least 30 Syrians in a government-controlled area near Aleppo, was indeed the work of “terrorists” —those that the US and its allies are backing in the war for regime change. The US president was not referring to these Al Qaeda-linked forces, however, but rather to the mass Shia political movement, Hezbollah, which has been a dominant force in the Lebanese government. He demanded that all foreign governments join Washington in branding it as a “terrorist organization.”

Obama repeated even more forcefully his threats against Iran and its nuclear program, claiming that while Washington would seek to bring about Tehran’s submission by diplomatic means, “time is not unlimited.”

“I have said to the world that all options are on the table for achieving our objectives,” he added. “America will do what we must to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran.”

Much of the rest of the speech appealed for the revival of the “peace process” and the “two-state solution.” Obama insisted that as part of any settlement, the Palestinians would have to recognize Israel as a “Jewish state,” a definition that would consolidate the apartheid-style disenfranchisement of non-Jews, including a large Palestinian population, inside Israel and abrogate any right of Palestinian refugees to return.

While the media praised this peace rhetoric as “bold” and “courageous,” the right-wing Zionist politicians of Netanyahu’s government brushed aside the US president’s remarks.

Netanyahu thanked Obama for the speech and his “unqualified support of Israel.” His new economy and trade Minister, Naftali Bennett, expressed reservations about Obama’s reference to Israeli occupation of the West Bank, however, declaring: “A nation cannot be an occupier in its own land.”

Danny Ayalon, the right-wing nationalist former deputy foreign minister said the speech was “no problem” as it contained no specific proposals for the so-called peace talks.

Meanwhile, the *Jerusalem Post* suggested that the talk of reviving the “peace process” was mere window dressing for the main aim of Obama’s trip, ratcheting up the war threat against Iran.

“Speculation has been rife for years that the US is

holding Israel back when it comes to Iran,” the newspaper noted. “Indeed, prior to Obama’s trip there was speculation that one of the main purposes of his journey was to hold a bright red stop light up to Netanyahu.”

It continued: “Publicly, however, restraining Israel has not been Obama’s message. Indeed, the opposite is true – and these are the words the Iranians are hearing as well.”

At Wednesday’s joint press conference, Obama recognized Israel’s unilateral “right” to attack Iran. “Each country has to make its own decisions when it comes to the awesome decision to engage in any kind of military action, and Israel is differently situated than the United States,” he said.

“Obama hopes it will not come to that on Iran, he hopes the Iranians will back down,” the *Jerusalem Post* commented. “But if they don’t, the credible military threat Netanyahu wants to see waved along with the economic, political and diplomatic pressure already being applied against Iran is no less than Israel itself. Iran, and the international community, have been warned.”

Ten years after invading Iraq, US imperialism is laying the groundwork for a war against Iran, which has three times both the land mass and population of Iraq. The motives are the same: control of one of the world’s most geo-strategically vital and energy-rich regions.

Any Israeli attack on Iran would draw in the US in short order. With his public endorsement of Israel’s “right” to launch such an attack, Obama has set in motion forces that are driving toward a conflagration.



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