

US presidential candidates give warmongering speeches backing Israel at AIPAC conference

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22 March 2016

Four of the five candidates for the Democratic and Republican presidential nominations sought to outdo one another in pledging unqualified support for Israel and issuing threats against Iran and its allies in appearances Monday before the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the most powerful pro-Israel lobby in the US.

All three Republican candidates spoke at the Washington DC event, as well as the Democratic front-runner, Hillary Clinton. Her Democratic opponent, Bernie Sanders, skipped the event to campaign in western states holding primary contests on Tuesday.

Clinton delivered a bellicose speech pledging to step up US support for Israel and threatening war against Iran. She went out of her way to satisfy the most diehard defenders of the Israeli state and its brutally repressive policies against the Palestinian people, with the possible exception of those openly fascistic elements who call for the expulsion of the Arabs from a Greater Israel. She used her appearance before AIPAC to attack Republican front-runner Donald Trump for having suggested that he would serve as a “neutral” broker in negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

“We need steady hands,” she declared, “not a president who says he’s neutral on Monday, pro-Israel on Tuesday, and who knows what on Wednesday, because everything’s negotiable. Well, my friends, Israel’s security is non-negotiable.”

Clinton also implicitly distanced herself from the Obama White House, whose relations with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have been tense, reaching a near-breaking point over the nuclear accord with Iran promoted by the US president. “We will

never allow Israel’s adversaries to think a wedge can be driven between us,” she told the cheering audience.

Promising, if elected in November, to take the US alliance with Israel “to a new level,” Clinton called for increased military aid and closer economic links with the Zionist state. She denounced Palestinian terror attacks on Israelis while making no mention of the tens of thousands of Palestinians who have been killed and wounded in the Israeli wars, bombings, targeted assassinations and deadly acts of repression, including the 2014 invasion of Gaza that killed over 2,300 Palestinians, the vast majority of them civilians. She equated criticism of Israeli war crimes with anti-Semitism and implicitly backed efforts by Zionist and pro-Israel organizations to ban anti-Israel protests on US college campuses.

Clinton cited three “evolving threats” to Israeli security: “Iran’s continued aggression, a rising tide of extremism across a wide arc of instability, and the growing effort to delegitimize Israel on the world stage.” To combat these dangers, she declared, “The United States and Israel must be closer than ever, stronger than ever, and more determined than ever to prevail against our common adversaries...”

While giving Israeli leaders political amnesty for their murderous attacks on Palestinians and Arabs in neighboring countries, Clinton accused the leadership of the Palestinian Authority of complicity in the recent rash of stabbings and other individual attacks on Israelis. “These attacks must end immediately,” she said. “And Palestinian leaders need to stop inciting violence, stop celebrating terrorists as martyrs and stop paying rewards to their families.”

This is the same person, it should be recalled, who as

First Lady met with the wife of then-Palestinian Authority President Yasir Arafat in November of 1999 and kissed her on the cheek. At that time, Washington was heavily promoting the so-called “peace process,” the main purpose of which was to align the Palestine Liberation Organization with US imperialist interests in the Middle East and integrate its security forces with the Israeli military and intelligence apparatus. Even then, after an outcry from Israeli officials and US Zionists, Clinton turned around within hours and denounced Suha Arafat for making “inflammatory” statements about Israel’s use of poison gas against Palestinians.

On the military/security front, Clinton called Monday for a quick conclusion to negotiations on a new ten-year US-Israel defense memorandum of understanding, adding that as president she would “make a firm commitment to ensure Israel maintains its qualitative military edge.” She urged the US to provide Israel with “the most sophisticated defense technology,” including new missile defense systems such as “the Arrow Three and David’s Sling.”

In regard to anti-Zionist protests on US campuses, Clinton lined up squarely behind the Israel lobby and its near-universal support within the US political establishment. She denounced the campaign for a boycott of Israeli academics from the right, branding it as anti-Semitic. “Particularly at a time when anti-Semitism is on the rise across the world, especially in Europe,” she declared, “we must repudiate all efforts to malign, isolate and undermine Israel and the Jewish people.” She went on to accuse supporters of the boycott campaign of attempting to silence and bully pro-Israel students.

Clinton reserved her most belligerent remarks for Iran. While defending her support for the nuclear accord sponsored by the Obama administration, Clinton pledged to respond to “even the smallest” Iranian violation of its terms, including through the reimposition of “all the sanctions” and “with force if necessary.” She went on to call for additional sanctions in response to Iran’s recent missile launchings and demanded that the European Union brand the Iran-allied Hezbollah movement in Lebanon a terrorist organization.

After promising to expand the war against ISIS, Clinton somewhat apologetically declared her support

for a resumption of negotiations for a so-called “two state” solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. She signaled that any such agreement would have to be on Israel’s terms, saying she would “vigorously oppose any attempt by outside parties to impose a solution, including the UN Security Council.”

Trump devoted almost his entire speech to denouncing the nuclear accord with Iran and pledging to “dismantle” it and “stand up to Iran’s aggressive push to destabilize and dominate the region.”

He went on to denounce the United Nations and the Obama administration for “treating Israel like a second-class citizen,” promised to veto any Middle East agreement drawn up by the UN, and concluded that as president he would move the US embassy “to the eternal capital of the Jewish people, Jerusalem.”

The speeches of all of the presidential candidates make clear that what is being prepared after the November elections is an escalation of war in the Middle East and beyond.



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