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PM takes aim at Iran in UN General Assembly address

PM Netanyahu calls on world leaders to remove sunset clause in Iran nuclear deal or risk another North Korea • In a message to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, PM warns: Those who threaten us with annihilation put themselves in mortal peril.

Gideon Allon, Associated Press and Israel Hayom Staff

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addresses the U.N. General Assembly in New York, Tuesday | Photo: EPA

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took aim at Iran on Tuesday in a powerful address before the United Nations General Assembly that also saw him praise Israel's improved international standing.

Netanyahu started his speech on a positive note, saying Israel is in the midst of "a great revolution – a revolution in Israel's standing among the nations." He said this was happening because "so many countries around the world have finally woken up to what Israel can do for them" as a leader in innovation, technology, and were recognizing its "exceptional capabilities in fighting terrorism."

He said that in recent years, "Israel has provided intelligence that has prevented dozens of major terrorist attacks around the world. We have saved countless lives. You may not know this, but your governments do, and they are working closely together with Israel to keep your countries safe and your citizens safe."

Netanyahu then went on to criticize the U.N. and its agencies for unfairly singling out Israel.

"Syria has barrel bombed, starved, gassed and murdered hundreds of thousands of its own citizens and wounded millions more, while Israel has provided lifesaving medical care to thousands of Syrian victims of that very same carnage. Yet who does the World Health Organization criticize? Israel. So is there no limit to the UN's absurdities when it comes to Israel? Well, apparently not, because in July, UNESCO declared the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron a Palestinian World Heritage site. That's worse than fake news – that's fake history," he said.

"Mind you, it's true that Abraham, the father of both Ishmael and Isaac, is buried there, but so too are Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca ... and Leah, who just happen to be patriarchs and matriarchs of the Jewish people. You won't read about that in the latest UNESCO report. But if you want to, you can read about that in a somewhat weightier publication – it's called the Bible. I highly recommend it."

Netanyahu noted that "despite the absurdities, despite the repetition of these farcical events," there have been signs of slow change at the U.N., an institution he said has for

years been "the epicenter of global anti-Semitism." He then thanked U.N. Secretary General António Guterres for his statement that denying Israel's right to exist was equivalent to anti-Semitism.

"We must also speak the truth about Iran, as [U.S.] President [Donald] Trump did so powerfully this morning," Netanyahu said. "President Trump rightly called the nuclear deal with Iran ... an embarrassment. Well, I couldn't agree with him more. And here's why: Iran vows to destroy my country every day, including by its chief of staff the other day. Iran is conducting a campaign of conquest across the Middle East and Iran is developing ballistic missiles to threaten the entire world.

"Two years ago, I stood here and explained why the Iranian nuclear deal not only doesn't block Iran's path to the bomb, Iran's nuclear program has what's called a sunset clause. ... And I warned that when that sunset comes, a dark shadow will be cast over the entire Middle East and the world because Iran will then be free to enrich uranium on an industrial scale, placing it on the threshold of a massive arsenal of nuclear weapons.

"I know there are those who still defend the dangerous deal with Iran, arguing that it will block Iran's path to the bomb. Ladies and gentlemen, that's exactly what they said about the nuclear deal with North Korea, and we all know how that turned out. Unfortunately, if nothing changes, this deal will turn out exactly the same way.

"That's why Israel's policy regarding the nuclear deal with Iran is very simple: Change it or cancel it, fix it or nix it. Nixing the deal means restoring massive pressure on Iran, including crippling sanctions, until Iran fully dismantles its nuclear weapons capability. Fixing the deal requires many things, among them inspecting military and any other site that is suspect, and penalizing Iran for every violation. But above all, fixing the deal means getting rid of the sunset clause.

"We must also stop Iran's development of ballistic missiles and roll back its growing aggression in the region," he continued. "Many supporters of the nuclear deal naively believed that it would moderate Iran. It would make it a responsible member, so they said, of the international community.

"Well, as you know, I strongly disagreed. I warned that when the sanctions on Iran would be removed, Iran would behave like a hungry tiger unleashed, not joining the community of nations, but devouring nations, one after the other. And that's precisely what Iran is doing today. From the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean, from Tehran to Tartus [in Syria], an Iranian curtain is descending across the Middle East. Iran spreads this curtain of tyranny and terror over Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and elsewhere, and it pledges to extinguish the light of Israel.

Netanyahu also had a message for Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei: "The light of Israel will never be extinguished. ... Those who threaten us with annihilation put themselves in mortal peril."

He said Israel would defend itself "with the full force of our arms and the full power of our convictions. We will act to prevent Iran from establishing permanent military bases in Syria for its air, sea and ground forces. We will act to prevent Iran from producing deadly weapons in Syria or in Lebanon for use against us. And we will act to prevent Iran from opening new terror fronts against Israel along our northern border."

Netanyahu warned that "as long as Iran's regime seeks the destruction of Israel, Iran will face no fiercer enemy than Israel."

But he also had a simple message for the Iranian people, which he delivered in both English and Farsi: "You are not our enemy; you are our friends."

"One day, my Iranian friends, you will be free from the evil regime that terrorizes you, hangs gays, jails journalists, tortures political prisoners, and shoots innocent women. ... And when that day of liberation finally comes, the friendship between our two ancient peoples will surely flourish once again."

Israel, the prime minister stressed, "is committed to achieving peace with all our Arab neighbors, including the Palestinians. Yesterday President Trump and I discussed this, all of this, at great length. I appreciate President Trump's leadership, his commitment to stand by Israel's side, his commitment to advance a peaceful future for all. Together we can seize the opportunities for peace and together we can confront the great dangers of Iran."

"Tomorrow evening, Jews around the world will celebrate Rosh Hashana, the beginning of our new year. It is time of reflection, and we look back with wonder at the miraculous rebirth of our nation, and we look ahead with pride to the remarkable contributions Israel will continue to make to all nations."

"As the Prophet Isaiah said: 'I have made you a light unto the nations, bringing salvation to the ends of the earth.' Today, 2,700 years after Isaiah spoke those prophetic words, Israel is becoming a rising power among the nations. And at long last, its light is shining across the continents, bringing hope and salvation to the ends of the earth."

"Happy new year, shanah tovah from Israel. Thank you."

Among those present for Netanyahu's speech were Sara Netanyahu, Regional Cooperation Minister Tzachi Hanegbi, National Security Adviser Meir Ben-Shabbat and representatives from the Prime Minister's Office. Israel's Ambassador to the U.N. Danny Danon, who was appointed vice president of the General Assembly last week, presided over Tuesday's assembly.

Nov. 29, 1947 | U.N. Partitions Palestine, Allowing for Creation of Israel  
BY THE LEARNING NETWORK NOVEMBER 29, 2011 4:08 AM November 29,  
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U.S. Central Intelligence AgencyThe U.N. 1947 partition plan for Palestine called for land to be parceled to Arabs and Jews.

On Nov. 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for Palestine to be partitioned between Arabs and Jews, allowing for the formation of the Jewish state of Israel.

Since 1917, Palestine had been under the control of Britain, which supported the creation of a Jewish state in the holy land. Sympathy for the Jewish cause grew during the genocide of European Jews during the Holocaust. In 1946, the Palestine issue was brought before the newly created United Nations, which drafted a partition plan.

The plan, which organized Palestine into three Jewish sections, four Arab sections and the internationally-administered city of Jerusalem, had strong support in Western nations as well as the Soviet Union. It was opposed by Arab nations.

The General Assembly voted, 33-13, in favor of partition, with 10 members, including Britain, abstaining. The six Arab nations in the General Assembly staged a walkout in protest. The New York Times reported: "The walkout of the Arab delegates was taken as a clear indication that the Palestinian Arabs would have nothing to do with the Assembly's decision. The British have emphasized repeatedly that British troops could not be used to impose a settlement not acceptable to both Jews and Arabs, and the partition plan does not provide outside military force to keep order. Instead, it provides for the establishment of armed militia by the two nascent states to keep internal order."

Six months later, on May 14, 1948, Jewish leaders in the region formed the state of Israel. British troops left, thousands of Palestinian Arabs fled and Arab armies invaded Israel. In the Arab-Israeli War, Israel defeated its enemies. It was the first of several wars fought between Israel and its neighbors.

