

Marco Rubio

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, let me begin by acknowledging the work the sponsors of the human trafficking bill are doing. Trafficking is a sanitized way to discuss this issue. It is actually slavery, and I am glad that term is finding its way into the lexicon of how this is discussed.

It is not just the sex trafficking--sex slavery--it is also labor trafficking, which is a major problem in this country as well.

I do hope we can find a way forward on this one. It is an extraordinarily important issue, one that has taken far too long to pay attention to. It is not something that happens just around the world, but it happens here closer than we think.

ISRAEL

Mr. President, I want to talk about a separate topic today as well. It is one a [Page: S1654] lot of people have been reading about in the newspapers over the last 72 hours.

As we all know, there was an election in Israel this week, and many people are wondering: What is this aftermath of the election we keep reading about, where there is this controversy and back and forth? Certainly some of that happened a few weeks ago, when the Prime Minister of Israel visited Washington and spoke before the Congress. People are wondering, what is it that is going on here and why is there so much controversy around all this? I want to take a moment to delve deeper into this, because this is important.

First of all, to answer the fundamental question: Why should we care about what is happening with Israel, in Israel, and about Israel? There are two reasons I think we should care.

The first is because Israel represents everything we want that region of the world to be. Israel is a democracy, as evidenced by the vibrant election process they just underwent. Israel is a free enterprise economy, a developed economy, that provides prosperity for its people and its partners in trade and commerce. And Israel is a strong American ally--a democracy, a free enterprise, and a strong American ally.

Don't we wish the entire Middle East looked that way? Don't we wish we had more countries in the Middle East that looked like Israel--that were allies, that were democratic, and had a free and prosperous economy? How much better would the world be if the Middle East looked more like Israel and less like Iraq and Syria and other places look like at this moment?

There is another reason why we should care about Israel. Israel is not just another country. It has a special and unique purpose. It was founded as a homeland for the Jewish people in the aftermath of the Second World War and of the Holocaust, where over 6 million human beings were slaughtered. It was founded on the promise that never again in the history of the world would there not be a place for the Jewish people to go and be safe. It is not just a nation, it is a nation with a special and unique purpose unlike any other nation in the world, and I for one am proud that the United States has stood with Israel for all these years, and I am proud that the American people on a bipartisan basis have stood behind the Jewish State of Israel for all of these years. So the security, safety, and future of Israel is in our national security interest, as well as a moral obligation of every Member of this body and us as a nation.

What are the underpinnings of Israeli security? There are two things. First, the ability of Israel to defend itself; and the second, the reality that if Israel ever has to defend itself, the United States will be there to support them.

There is little doubt about the first pillar of its security. As the Prime Minister reminded us: Unlike many other countries, Israel is not asking us to send American soldiers or aircraft to support them. They are willing to defend themselves. But the second pillar, about strong and unquestionable American support, is increasingly being questioned around the world. And there is good reason why.

Let's begin with the aftermath of this recent election.

As far as I know--maybe this has changed in the last few hours--after this election, the President has yet to call the Prime Minister. That is unlike, of course, the fact that in March of 2012, he was among the first to call and congratulate Putin in Moscow. Or that in June of 2012, he was among the first to call Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood when they won the Egyptian Presidency. Or that in November of 2012, he called to congratulate the top Chinese Communists on their new position--which, by the way, is not elected in the way you and I would consider there to be an election. Or the fact that in 2013, there was an historic phone call. They bragged about how he called the Iranian President and congratulated him on his election. And of course, in August of 2014, he called to congratulate Turkey's President Erdogan.

And on and on.

Time and again, this President has made a habit of quickly calling these leaders when they win. But as of 4:40 p.m. eastern time, as far as I know, that call has yet not been made. Thinking about all the things that have been going on with Israel, we would think he would be quick to make that call. It hasn't happened. Maybe it has already, but it certainly didn't happen fast enough.

But where does this come from? Is this new? Is this something that just happened recently? It isn't. In fact, we can start to see the trends here pretty early.

In October of 2008, then-Senator Obama told an audience in Cleveland:

There is a strain within the pro-Israel community that says unless you adopt an unwavering pro-Likud [one of the political parties in Israel] approach to Israel that you're anti-Israel.

Which is a silly comment to make, since at that time that party had been out of power.

In January of 2009, the President, upon taking office, makes a quick phone call to the Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas before he even phoned the Israeli Prime Minister. Abbas's spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeina quoted Obama as saying:

This is my first phone call to a foreign leader, and I'm making it only hours after I took office.

In July of 2009, the President hosted American Jewish leaders at the White House, and he reportedly told them that he sought to put ``daylight" between America and Israel. Here is the quote that someone at that meeting says he made: ``For eight years [during the Bush administration] there was no light between the United States and Israel, and nothing got accomplished," he declared.

In September of 2009, in his first address to the U.N. General Assembly, President Obama devoted five paragraphs to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, during which he declared--to loud applause; by the way, in the United Nations, no surprise-- ``America does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements." He went on to draw a connection between rocket attacks on Israeli civilians with living conditions in Gaza. There was not a single unconditional criticism of Palestinian terrorism.

In March of 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton berated Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu on a now infamous 45-minute call, telling him that Israel had ``harmed the bilateral relationship." By the way, the State Department triumphantly shared details of the call with the press. That same month, the Israeli Ambassador was dressed down at the State Department, and Mr. Obama's Middle East envoy canceled his trip to Israel, and the United States under his leadership joined the European condemnation of Israel.

In May of 2011, the State Department issued a press release declaring that the Department's No. 2 official would be visiting ``Israel, Jerusalem, and the West Bank," as if Jerusalem was not part of Israel. So they left that separate.

Later in the month, only hours before Mr. Netanyahu departed from Israel to Washington, Mr. Obama delivered his infamous Arab Spring speech, which focused on a demand that Israel return to its indefensible pre-1967 borders with land swaps.

In November of 2011, an open microphone caught part of a private conversation with the President and French President Nicolas Sarkozy. Sarkozy said of the Israeli premier:

I can't stand Netanyahu. He's a liar.

But rather than defend Israel, the President piled on. He said:

You're tired of him; what about me? I have to deal with him every day.

In February of 2012, at a conference in Tunis, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was asked about Mr. Obama pandering to ``Zionist lobbies." She acknowledged that it was ``a fair question" and went on to explain that during an election season ``there are comments made that certainly don't reflect our foreign policy."

In 2014, during the Gaza conflict, the White House and the State Department criticized Israel for the deaths of Palestinians who were being used as human shields by Hamas. But far worse and far more suggestive of the President's true feelings was the White House's decision to try and use arms supplies as a pressure point against Israel.

In October of 2014, an anonymous administration official called Prime Minister Netanyahu ``a chicken----" I can't even finish it. [Page: S1655]

That is what has happened up to this point. That is what has happened up to this point. What has happened now? An election just happened 2 days ago. The first thing the White House says is: You used a lot of divisive language in that election. That is saying a lot from someone who has been elected at least once, probably twice, on extremely divisive language.

But what about when Iran had a fraudulent election in 2009 and the people of Iran took to the streets to protest in the famous Green Revolution? You know what the White House said? We are not going to comment on that election because we are not going to interfere in the sovereignty of Iran. They will comment on the elections of an ally, calling the rhetoric of the election divisive. But when an enemy--which is what Iran is--has a fraudulent election and kills people who protest against it, we can't comment. We can't comment because that would be infringing on their sovereignty.

The other thing that has happened is the Prime Minister made a statement about how a two-state solution isn't possible given the current circumstances. What does the White House do? They jump up and say: Well, that means we may have to reconsider. We may have to go to the United Nations Security Council now and support a resolution, and that means not to use our veto authority to stop a resolution that calls on Israel to create a Palestinian State with 1967 borders.

Why would the Prime Minister of Israel say that, by the way? He is right; the conditions don't exist. Do you want to know why the conditions don't exist? First of all, let's go through the history of peace negotiations.

In 2000, at Camp David, Israel offered the Palestinian Authority nearly all of the West Bank, Eastern Jerusalem, and Gaza. The Palestinians said no. In 2000, Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon. Do you know what that is today? That is a place where they launch rockets against Israel.

In 2005, Israel withdrew from Gaza. Do you know what that is today? A place where they launch rockets from against Israel.

In 2008, Israel offered--again, to the Palestinian Authority--nearly all of the West Bank, nearly all of Judea and Samaria and Eastern Jerusalem. The Palestinian authority said no.

What about the Palestinian record? Let's begin with the fact that according to many reports, about 6 percent of the Palestinian budget is diverted to pay the salary of prisoners. That means the salary of terrorists, of people who have blown up centers and killed civilians, including Americans. They are being paid salaries and benefits, including with money from donors, such as the United States, Great Britain, Norway, and Denmark.

Here is another material on how the PA routinely depicts a world without Israel. This is from a Palestinian schoolbook:

Palestine's war ended with a catastrophe that is unprecedented in history, when the Zionist gangs stole Palestine and established the so-called State of Israel.

Or what about this particularly horrific expression of ideology which appeared in a Palestinian Authority daily as far back as 1998:

The difference between Hitler and [British Foreign Minister] Balfour was simple: the former [Hitler] did not have colonies to send the Jews to, so he destroyed them, whereas Balfour [turned] Palestine into his colony and sent the Jews. Balfour is Hitler with colonies, while Hitler is Balfour without colonies. They both wanted to get rid of the Jews...Zionism was crucial to the defense of the West, [by] ridding Europe of the burden of the Jews.

This is from a daily of the PA. These are the people with whom we are pressuring them to cut a peace deal.

What about this?

The Palestinian Authority has named numerous locations and events after Palestinian terrorists responsible for killing Israeli civilians.

What about this? This opinion piece appeared in the New York Times in 2013:

The Palestinian Authority's television and radio stations, public schools, summer camps, children's magazines and Web sites are being used to drive home four core messages. First, that the existence of a Jewish state is illegitimate because there is no Jewish people and no Jewish history. Second, that Jews and Zionists are horrible creatures that corrupt those in their vicinity. Third, that Palestinians must continue to struggle until the inevitable replacement of Israel by an Arab-Palestinian

state. And fourth, that all forms of resistance are honorable and valid, even if some forms of violence are not always expedient. Instead of being schooled in the "culture of peace," the next generation of Palestinians is being relentlessly fed a rhetorical diet that includes the idolization of terrorists, the demonization of Jews and the conviction that sooner or later Israel should cease to exist.

These are the people with whom this President wants to put pressure on them to cut a peace deal. I think Netanyahu is right. The conditions do not exist for a peace deal with people who teach their children that killing Jews is a glorious thing. The conditions for peace do not exist with a people--with a government, I should say, not a people. The people are victims of this government, the Palestinian Authority--not to mention Hamas, which teaches people that killing Jews is a glorious thing, that there is no such thing as a Jewish people, that any methods of destroying them is valid, that pays them salaries and benefits.

This President is making a historic mistake. Allies have differences. But for allies such as Israel, when you have a difference with them and it is public, it emboldens their enemies--to launch more rockets out of southern Lebanon and Gaza, to launch more terrorist attacks, to go to international forums and delegitimize Israel's right to exist. This is what they are doing.

This is a historic and tragic mistake. Israel is not a Republican or a Democratic issue. If this were a Republican President doing these things, I would give the exact same speech. In fact, I would be even angrier. This is outrageous. It is irresponsible, and it is dangerous. It betrays the commitment this Nation has made to the right of a Jewish State to exist in peace. No people on earth want peace more than the people of Israel. No people have suffered more at the hands of this violence and this terrorism than the people of Israel. They need America's support unconditionally. If there are differences, they need to be dealt with privately as we do with other allies.

More than anything else, they deserve to be treated with more respect, not less than the respect this President and this White House is giving the Supreme Leader of Iran. He would not dare say the things about the Supreme Leader of Iran now that he is saying about the Prime Minister of Israel because he wouldn't want to endanger his peace deal or his arms deal that he is working out with them.

I hope he will reconsider. I hope the bipartisan nature of our support of Israel is reinvigorated. I hope that once again this body, this Congress, and this government will recommit themselves to this extraordinarily important relationship, because if America doesn't stand with Israel, who would we stand with? If Israel--a democracy, a strong American ally on the international stage--is not worthy of our unconditional support, then what ally of ours around the world can feel safe in their alliance with us?

I yield the floor.