

# ISRAEL

**United Nations  
61<sup>st</sup> General Assembly**

**ADDRESS**

**H.E. Tzipi Livni**

**Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs  
State of Israel**

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**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

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Mr. Secretary General,

Madame President,

Families of the Israeli hostages, for whose safe return we pray,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentleman,

These days, the days of the United Nations General Assembly, fall this year at a time of unique significance for the Jewish people. They come on the eve of the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement and are known as הימים הנוראים - the Days of Awe.

In Jewish tradition, these are days of תשובה - of soul-searching and prayer, of judgment and of renewal. This concept of reflection is fitting not just for the faithful. It should be a time of reflection for nations as well. Let us use this time, and this gathering, to look deeply and honestly at the world in which we live - the world as it is, and as it might be.

Madame President,

The United Nations emerged from the horrors of war and offered a vision of a new and peaceful world. But we see the suffering of the people of Darfur, we see bloodshed and violence across the globe and we know that this is not yet the world in which we live.

Our planet remains torn by conflict. At its heart, this is a conflict about values; a battle of ideas. It is a conflict about whether to respect or to reject the other - a conflict between tolerance and tyranny, between the promise of co-existence and the hopelessness of hate.

We see it played out in internet chat-rooms and in houses of prayer, in classrooms and newsrooms, on the battlefield and in the corridors of power. It is the challenge of our time.

We, the people of Israel, have lived for many years on the frontlines of this conflict. Our nation has felt its fury; our soldiers have fought and died in its battles. An ancient people in the heart of the Middle East - great in history but small in number - we have been a constant target of those that oppose our very existence.

We face this conflict on different fronts: as Jews against the dark forces of anti-Semitism, as Israelis against the enemies of our statehood, and as members of the free world against the merchants of global terror.

We have been guided in this conflict by two core values that are embodied in our declaration of independence and shape our national identity.

The first - that Israel, with Jerusalem at its heart, is the national homeland of the Jewish people - their refuge from persecution, their first and last line of defense. The second - that Israel is a democracy; that the values of justice, peace and humanity - first expressed by the prophets of Israel - are an integral part of our nation's sense of mission.

We share the same values as the community of democratic States. We are ready, and proud, to be judged by them. They are our own. But too often there is a gap between perception and reality. Too often, Israel is not seen for its unique creativity and spirit of enterprise, for its contribution - well beyond its size - to the sciences and to literature, to human development and innovation.

In many parts of the world, we are seen mainly through the lens of the Arab-Israeli conflict. And too often, that lens is distorted. To many, this conflict is portrayed as a clash of David and Goliath, with Israel perceived unjustly as Goliath. But this simplistic image ignores the fact that Israel remains a threatened democracy in a hostile region.

We have, of necessity, the capacity to defend ourselves but we will always be constrained in its use by our values. And yet, we face an enemy willing to use all the means at its disposal, to kill without restraint and without distinction.

Every innocent casualty in this conflict is a tragedy. There is no difference between the tears of a grieving Israeli mother and a grieving Palestinian mother. But there is a critical moral difference between the terrorists that hunt down civilians, and the soldiers that target terrorists, while trying to avoid civilian casualties.

To protect its integrity, the international community must uphold this basic moral distinction. Terror is terror - even when it is called resistance. It cannot be justified and it cannot be equated with the actions of those seeking only to defend themselves against it.

Madame President,

If we want to protect our values, it is not enough to believe in them - we must act according to them. There is no greater challenge to our values than that posed by the leaders of Iran. They deny and mock the Holocaust. They speak proudly and openly of their desire to wipe Israel off the map. And now, by their actions, they pursue the weapons to achieve this objective, to imperil the region and to threaten the world.

The moment of truth, Madame President, is here.

The international community is faced with no greater responsibility than to stand against this dark and growing danger - not for Israel's sake, but for its own; for the sake of the values it claims to embrace; for the sake of the world we all wish our children to inherit.



What more needs to happen for the world to take this threat seriously? What more needs to happen to end the hesitation and the excuses? We know the lessons of the past. We know the consequences of appeasement and indifference. There is no place for such leaders in this forum. There is no place for such a regime in the family of nations.

Madame President,

For any who still had doubts, the Iranian threat was exposed to all in the recent conflict in Lebanon. Armed, financed and directed by Iran, Hezbollah kidnapped Israeli soldiers and targeted Israeli cities, but it was the hopes of an entire region that they aimed to take hostage.

Out of the conflict - and because of Israel's response to it - opportunity has emerged. But much is needed to turn opportunity into reality. Hezbollah can never again be allowed to threaten the future of the region. The world faces a critical test - to ensure the full implementation of resolution 1701, and the immediate and safe release of the Israeli hostages.

Madame President,

As we are gathered here, we think of anxious families, who ache for the return of their loved ones - parents waiting for a son, a brother for a brother, a wife for a husband. Israel will not rest until all the Israeli hostages are returned safely to the arms of their devoted families and the embrace of a loving nation. Let us all make them the same promise today.

Madame President,

Last year, a great leader of Israel, Ariel Sharon, stood before this forum and said: "The Palestinians will always be our neighbors. We respect them, and have no aspirations to rule over them. They are also entitled to freedom and to a national, sovereign existence in a state of their own."

This was not only the voice and vision of one man. It is the voice and vision of a nation. We do not believe that Israeli-Palestinian relations are, of necessity, a zero sum game. Not every Israeli interest is at odds with Palestinian interests.

There is, in fact, a common vision that binds Israelis, moderate Palestinians and the international community together. It serves the goals of both peoples and represents the basis of a genuine and lasting peace.

At its heart, is the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Israel believes in this vision, and from this vision we have drawn our principles for peace.

The first is inherent in the very idea of two States. For the Jewish people, Israel was established to be our national homeland. It was the solution for Jewish refugees, the realization of Jewish rights.

And this is the true calling of the future State of Palestine: a national homeland for the Palestinian people - the solution to Palestinian claims, the fulfillment of Palestinian dreams, the answer for Palestinian refugees - wherever they may be.

If Palestinian leaders are unwilling to say this, the world should say it for them. Instead of giving false hope, it is time to end the exploitation of the refugee issue, and begin to resolve it on the basis of the vision of two States, two homelands.

This is the real and only meaning of the two-State vision. It requires each people to accept that their rights are realized through the establishment of their own homeland, not in the homeland of others.

The second principle for peace is drawn from the concept of living in peace and security. On the basis of this principle the international community has insisted that the State of Palestine that emerges next to Israel cannot be a terror State. It is the last thing our troubled region needs.

It is for this reason that the Road Map requires an end to terror. It is for this reason that the international community has demanded that any Palestinian government fulfill three basic conditions: renounce terrorism, recognize Israel's right to exist, and accept existing Israeli-Palestinian agreements. These conditions are not an obstacle to peace or to the establishment of a responsible Palestinian state; they are a crucial ingredient for their realization.

An end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will also require agreement on a common boundary. There are those who believe that if only we could turn back the hands of time to 1967 all would be resolved. But, in 1967, there was no Palestinian State, there was no link between the West Bank and Gaza, and there was no commitment to lasting peace.

A two-State solution requires the creation of a new reality, which never existed in the past. For it to succeed, both sides will need to commit to compromise and to believe in co-existence.

Madame President,

If only we could end the conflict today. But we have learned from bitter experience that to reach lasting peace it is not enough to have a vision. Peace must be built on the solid foundations of shared values, not the shifting sands of false promises.

Without this, the political horizon will always be out of reach. We have seen negotiations doomed by mistrust and frustration. We have seen them lay the ground for greater violence not greater understanding. We cannot afford to repeat the experience.



Unfortunately, the Palestinian Authority is dominated today by a terrorist organization that teaches children to hate and seeks to transform the conflict from a resolvable political dispute into an endless religious confrontation.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the consequence and not the cause of this ideology of intolerance and hatred. We cannot reach peace by ignoring these realities. We cannot find the solutions for tomorrow, without addressing the problems of today.

But we also cannot give up hope and I refuse to do so.

In a Middle East where being moderate is often the same as being weak, our challenge is to empower the peacemakers and disempower their opponents. The Road Map phases and the three international conditions are designed precisely for this purpose.

But if the world hesitates in enforcing these standards, the extremists sense opportunity. And if it appeases, they sense victory. This is the moment for determination not half-measures and vague formulations. It is the moment to demand that those Palestinian leaders that believe in peace determine the future on these terms, not on the terms of the terrorists.

Unfortunately, there are no shortcuts on the road to peace. But stagnation is not in our interest and it is not our policy.

It is in this spirit that Israel embarked on the painful process of disengagement, to create an opportunity for progress but, sadly, we received terror in return.

And it is in this spirit that I met with Chairman Abbas two days ago and we agreed to re-energize the dialogue between us, and create a permanent channel to pursue ways to advance together.

The parties do not need another forum to act out their differences and the only forum that will resolve them is the bilateral negotiating table.

We have no illusions about the difficulties before us - we must face them not ignore them. But we can advance along the road to peace if we have the strength to defend its principles, and the courage to confront its enemies.

Madame President,

In these days, while Jews prepare to welcome a New Year, Muslims around the world prepare for the holy month of Ramadan. As two great faiths begin their annual journey of reflection and decision, let the nations of the world begin it too.

The Jewish prayers tell us that this is a time of decision not just for individuals but also for States: "which for the sword and which for peace, which for famine and which for plenty".

These are sobering words, but they are also empowering ones. The message of these special days is that no future is pre-determined; no conflict is inevitable. It is up to us to make the right choices. History will judge us by them.

In the words of the traditional greeting:

תכלה שנה וקללותיה, תחל שנה וברכותיה

May the curses of the last year end; may the blessing of the new year begin.

Shana Tova.