

It's Not Too Late for Biden to Add Conditions to the Promises He Has Made to the Palestinians

by Hugh Fitzgerald



It's not too late for Biden to add some conditions to those promises that he has already made to the Palestinians. He should now declare that "I am ready to reopen the consulate in East Jerusalem – I've said that since May – and to let the PLO reopen an office in Washington, and I'm even willing to

discuss aid to the Palestinians, but only if the PA first meets three of our non-negotiable demands. First, the PA must give a firm pledge that it will completely dismantle its “Pay For Slay” program: no more incentivizing terrorism by giving large stipends to imprisoned terrorists or to the families of dead terrorists. Second, the PA must immediately renew its security cooperation with Israel, in order to stop terrorism in the West Bank. Third, the PA should end its criticism of Arab states for normalizing relations with Israel. If the PA fails to fulfill any of those pledges, that consulate in East Jerusalem will again be closed, the PLO office won’t open in Washington, and more aid for the Palestinians will be off the table.”

“Biden a veteran friend of Israel, settlement critic, may be at odds over Iran,” by Raphael Ahren, [Times of Israel](#), November 7, 2020:

At the same time, he [Biden] has vowed to push the PA toward ending its policy of paying stipends to individuals imprisoned for acts of terrorism.”

“Vowing to push the PA” to end its Pay-For-Slay program is not the same thing as making a non-negotiable demand of the PA to stop the Pay-For-Slay program, because otherwise there will be no American consulate re-opening in East Jerusalem.

While he was not in favor of moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem, he said he would not relocate it back to Tel Aviv.

Why was Biden – who, we are assured by Ambassador Michael Oren, “gets Israel, he gets it,” Joe Biden who cares so much for the Jewish state, will always have its back, remembers vividly his encounters with Golda Meir and Menachem Begin that made such a deep impression – not in favor of moving the American Embassy to Jerusalem? Did he consider that move insufficiently justified by the last 3500 years of Jewish

history in the city? Did he not know that a united Jerusalem was, according to the Palestine Mandate, always meant to be the future capital of the Jewish National Home? Why did he feel compelled to let the world know he had not been “in favor” of such a move but would, nonetheless, begrudgingly accept it? Why didn’t he say something quite different: “Folks, both houses of Congress passed the Jerusalem Embassy Act in 1995. 25 years ago! A quarter-century! In the Senate it passed 93-5. You know I was for it back in 1995, and I’ve been for it ever since. Too many excuses were found to delay its implementation. Moving the Embassy, at long last, to where it always belonged, was the right thing to do.” That’s what he should have said but, even though “he gets Israel,” he chose not to.

For Israel, such steps [the reopening of the consulate in East Jerusalem and the PLO office in Washington] would be a nuisance, but ultimately far less concerning than a move toward renewing Washington’s participation in the Iran nuclear deal, according to Oren, the former ambassador.

“The Palestinian issues are mostly symbolic. But Iran poses a strategic threat,” he said.

Will a President Biden really revive the 2015 nuclear pact he championed at the time?

Oren is a bit too cavalier on the subject of Biden’s moves to win the favor of the Palestinians. It’s true that Iran is the kind of threat journalists like to call “existential,” and there is tremendous anxiety in Israel over Biden’s likely revival of the 2015 nuclear deal. But that outreach by Biden to the Palestinians is not inconsequential. They have been given a new lease on their political life: just as they were on the ropes, feeling abandoned even by the Arab League, growing gloomily aware that they are no longer the center of Arab concerns, Biden rushes to save them. Now they’ve been

promised by Biden, without having themselves had to promise anything in return, a reopening of the American consulate in East Jerusalem, which helps promote their claim to having Jerusalem as the future capital of "Palestine"; the reopening, as well, of a PLO office in Washington, from where propaganda, recruitment, and fundraising can be conducted, and finally, a Biden pledge that the spigot of American aid will again be turned on for the Palestinians, who have done exactly nothing to deserve it. Forget about the mismanagement and colossal corruption of both the PA in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza. Starting in a matter of months, with Biden in the White House – and likely with Tony Blinken at State – the money for the undeserving Palestinians will be on its way!

"What the vice president said is that if Iran comes back into compliance with its obligations under the agreement, we would do the same and then work with our allies and partners to build a longer and stronger agreement," Tony Blinken, Biden's senior foreign policy adviser, told The Times of Israel last week.

Why not ask the countries most directly threatened by Iran's nuclear program – Israel, Saudi Arabia, the UAE – how they see the revival of the nuclear deal with Iran? Their dismay at Trump's loss is palpable, for they know it means a renewal of the nuclear pact with Iran and an end to those crippling sanctions that were working so well. They have heard the crowing of Hassan Rouhani about the coming revival of the nuclear agreement. But apparently neither Biden, nor his foreign policy adviser Tony Blinken, wish to recognize the effectiveness of the current sanctions.

"He's [Biden's] also been very clear that he would not allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon. But we found that the best way to prevent that occurrence is through the [nuclear deal]. And it was working."

Was the nuclear deal really “the best way” to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power? Was it “working” before Trump came along and tried something else – crippling sanctions? Hasn’t Iran been driven by those sanctions to economic ruin, as it never was when the Iran deal was in force? The country most threatened by Iran is Israel. And the Israelis are united in their opposition to the nuclear deal with Iran. They too don’t “want to allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon.” But they have very different views from Joe Biden on the way to prevent that. As they see it from Jerusalem, the best way to prevent Iran’s nuclear program from succeeding is by continuing the devastating economic sanctions that the Trump Administration imposed. Could it be that those Israelis, in what is for them a life-and-death matter, understand better than Joe Biden and Kamala Harris how best to prevent Iran from going nuclear? Hassan Rouhani has already hailed the victory of Joe Biden, and claimed Iran is looking forward to a return to the nuclear deal. If Iran is so elated about that “return-to-the-nuclear-deal,” shouldn’t that give the Biden administration pause?

Such a policy may put Washington again on a collision course with Jerusalem. Indeed, a Biden administration rejoining the agreement could lead to war between Israel and Iran because Jerusalem would be “forced to take action,” Settlement Affairs Minister Tzachi Hanegbi said Thursday.

Tzachi Hanegbi is exactly right. Rejoining the agreement – the nuclear deal with Iran – will make it easier, not harder, for Iran to proceed with its nuclear project, which Israel cannot tolerate. It will be forced to attack Iran before the Islamic Republic acquires nuclear weapons. Israel has already done a lot – more than the U.S. – to slow down Iran’s progress. There was the Stuxnet computer worm that caused more than 1,000 Iranian centrifuges to speed up so fast they destroyed themselves. There was the targeted killing of four of Iran’s most important nuclear scientists, one after the other. There

was the raid, in the middle of the night, in the middle of Tehran, by Mossad agents. who managed to locate a nondescript building, then blow-torched their way through 32 steel doors, to rooms where they found, seized, and spirited back to Israel, undetected all the while, the complete nuclear archive of Iran, consisting of 50,000 pages and 163 computer discs – information that showed the true extent of Iran’s program and also provided a guide to some nuclear sites that had previously been unknown in the West. And finally, there was Israel’s on-site “sabotage” that caused the complete destruction of the new plant for advanced centrifuges that Iran had been building at Natanz. Israel has made enormous efforts to set back Iran’s nuclear program. It has earned the right to be listened to by the Biden Administration. If Israel’s leaders, military and civilian, are convinced that the sanctions are working to slow down Iran’s program more effectively than the nuclear deal ever did, shouldn’t we listen to them?

However, as opposed to Obama, Biden has a long and intimate personal relationship with Netanyahu.

“We’ve been personal friends for almost three decades,” Netanyahu said in 2010 as he hosted Biden in his Jerusalem office. “And in all that time you’ve been a real friend to me and a real friend to Israel and to the Jewish people.”

Six years and much daylight later, the vice president visited Israel again.

“I hope you feel at home here in Israel because the people of Israel consider the Biden family part of our family. You’re part of our mishpucha,” the prime minister said during a joint press conference, using the Yiddish term for family.

“It’s true that Prime Minister Bibi and I go back a long way,” the vice president replied.

“A long time ago when you were at the Israeli consulate, we

met outside in a parking lot outside of a restaurant where I was meeting with some American Jewish leaders,” he recalled. “And we became close friends and I later signed a picture for you that I, as a joke, I said, ‘Bibi, I don’t agree with a damn thing you say, but I love you.’”

A little less of the love expressed for Bibi, please, and a lot more study on your part, Joe. What study? you ask. Oh, Joe, study of the history of modern Israel, the dangers it has passed and those that still remain from both the recently-invented “Palestinian people” and from the mad mullahs of Tehran, that’s what is asked of you at this point. It’s not too late, Joe. Start with the Mandate for Palestine. Work your way through it all: the British betrayal of their promises to the Jews; the British White Paper of 1939; the 1948 war by seven Arab armies determined to snuff out the young life of the Jewish state; Jordan’s seizure of the West Bank; the second attempt to destroy Israel, this time by three Arab armies, in 1967; the war, too, in 1973, on Yom Kippur, a war that Israel was in danger of losing; the Hamas Charter; the Palestine Charter; all the little wars, in Lebanon and Gaza; all the terrorism from Hamas and Hezbollah; the peace treaties that have led only to a “cold peace”; the territory that Israel gave back; the territory it has a right to keep but is still prepared to yield to a future “Palestine”; the territory the Jewish state must, for security reasons, retain no matter what; the colossal corruption and massive theft of foreign aid by the leaders of both the PA and Hamas; the generous offers of West Bank land made by Israel to the Palestinians that were turned down flat; the growing alliance between Israel and Gulf Arab states, brought together by the shared menace of Iran. For now, Joe, that’s enough. Go to it. Burn the midnight oil. You’ll be surprised what you’ll discover. And Bibi, whom you “love,” is one of millions of Israelis who will thank you.

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