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PM Speech at Bar Ilan University

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Speech (Sunday, 6 Oct.) at the Israel Towards 2020 Conference at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies

[Translated from Hebrew]

I recently read a hundred-page book by a wonderful American historian who passed away nearly 50 years ago. His name was Will Durant and he wrote many books. He wrote an eleven volume history of civilization, but at the end of his life, he wrote a hundred-page book, The Lessons of History. You should read it. Every line is carved from the stone of truth, and I will give you the bad news and the good news .

The bad news is that when you finish reading this book, you understand that in history, greater numbers rule. They matter. But here is the good news. On page 17, if I am not mistaken, he mentions that there may be exceptions to this rule and that through the unification of a cultural force, that's what he called it, the odds could be overcome. He gives the State of Israel as an example of such an exception .

I think that we have proven in the 65 years of Israel's existence that we are exceptional, but we must continue to be so, also by preserving our spiritual foundations. Two weeks ago, archaeologists found a gold medallion near the Western Wall. The archaeologists dated it to the beginning of the seventh century and there is a menorah on the medallion – our national symbol. On one side, a Torah scroll and on the other a shofar. The entire Torah on one medallion and of course, this was after 2,000 years of Jewish existence in the Land of Israel. This existence has lasted for nearly 4,000 years. Apparently there is something special about this exception of ours, in our unique combination of our past heritage and the way that we look to the future with our full force and talents and I would even say genius. There is no doubt that this university is part of our national and international effort to preserve our heritage and of course combine it with the future.

I thank you for your invitation to speak here, on the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Begin-Sadat Center. Many things have happened to us during those years. On the political front, we signed a peace agreement with Jordan. During all that time, exactly 20 years, we have been conducting negotiations with the Palestinians, trying to achieve a peace agreement, and despite ups and downs during these two decades, we managed to maintain the peace accords with Egypt. This is not insignificant .

However, without a doubt, **the most significant developments in the Middle East during this entire period are those of the past few years**, and they overshadow

all the rest when taking a broad view. Two of these developments include the historic unrest taking place in the Arab world – unrest that is at its height and far from over if such a thing can actually end; and of course Iran's ongoing efforts to develop nuclear weapons. **Iran's goal is to take over the entire Middle East and beyond, and to destroy the State of Israel. This is not speculation; this is their goal.**

Israel and the United States agree that Iran must be prevented from arming itself with nuclear weapons. Just days ago, the Iranian president said at the UN that Iran is only interested in civilian nuclear power. That's what he said .

I do not believe him, but anyone interested in examining his statement should ask the Iranian regime one simple question – **if you only want peaceful nuclear energy, why do you insist on centrifuges to enrich uranium and on plutonium reactors? Neither of these things is necessary to produce peaceful nuclear energy.** There is no need for them; however they are the essential components for producing fissile material for nuclear weapons. This must be understood – they are not needed at all for peaceful purposes. Seventeen countries, including some of the leading countries in the world – Canada, Mexico, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, Indonesia with a quarter of a million people – and many others produce nuclear energy without centrifuges, without plutonium reactors.

Only someone who wants to produce fissile material for nuclear bombs insists on these components – not only insists, but is willing to inflict great suffering on his people because this insistence involves sanctions and dictates by the Security Council. Why do they do this? Perhaps they are lacking energy resources? They have gas and oil. I mention natural gas on purpose because it is immediately available for industry and for everything else. They have so many resources that they can provide for the needs of considerable areas of the world for many years with what they have, certainly for the needs of their own country .

Therefore, the international community should take the following position vis-à-vis Iran – **we are ready to reach a diplomatic resolution, but only one that dismantles Iran's ability to produce nuclear weapons.** In other words, no centrifuges or enriched uranium, no plutonium reactor. As long as Iran does not dismantle its centrifuges and plutonium reactors, the sanctions must not be eased at all. On the contrary, they should be increased .

The truth is simple, it is clear, it cuts like a razor through the fog they are trying to create. If their intentions are peaceful, they will agree. If they are not peaceful, they will not agree. But perhaps the formula should be put simply as follows: they dismantle, they receive; they don't dismantle, they don't receive. And this is a difficult struggle because it is human nature to hope, to believe, to try – we are willing to try but not to conduct an open experiment without criteria and certainly not without a realistic and clear-sighted view .

Parallel with the attempt to stop Iran's nuclear armament and preserve the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, we are interested in bringing the conflict with the Palestinians to an end. Achieving a genuine and secure peace, with real security and not just on paper but on the ground – for us, our children, our grandchildren – this is

the greatest wish of all citizens of Israel. In order to bring about an end to the conflict, the root of the conflict must be understood.

I bring this up because, in my opinion, in all the discussions regarding the conflict with the Palestinians, at least one thing has been achieved and that is that whoever believed that it was the core of the conflict in the Middle East – well, now it is difficult to say such a thing without sounding absurd. It is not the core of the conflict – not what is happening in Libya or Tunisia or Algeria or Egypt or Yemen or Syria or Iraq and so on and so forth. But for years they told us that the core of the conflict in the Middle East was the Palestinian matter and... how shall I put this? That sacred cow is one of the victims of the Arab revolution.

However, there is a second sacred cow in equal measure. When people are asked what the root of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is – since if you want to provide a solution or fix a certain problem, first you must correctly diagnose the illness. Well, **when asked what the root of the conflict is, people usually have an answer at the ready: the occupation, the territories, the settlements** and so on – it is all the same. Israel "taking control of the territories", the area of Judea and Samaria after the Six Day War, the settlements – this is what sustains the conflict, this is what created the conflict for the most part. **And I ask, is it really?**

In my opinion, if one must choose a process by which the conflict started in actual fact, I would set the date at 1921 on the day on which the Palestinian Arabs attacked the immigration hostel in Jaffa.

Many Jews were killed in this attack, including the well-known writer Y.H. Brenner. This attack was directed against Jewish immigration. My grandfather arrived in Jaffa, at that same hostel, the year before, as did many others. Clearly this attack was not about territory or settlements; it was against Jewish immigration to the Land of Israel. Later there were more attacks: In 1929, the ancient Jewish community in Hebron was brutally slaughtered. It had existed there nearly uninterrupted for close to 4,000 years. After that, there were attacks in '36, in '39 – what they called unrest. These were repeated and methodical attacks against the Jewish community in Israel .

Later on there was the Partition Plan of 1947, wherein it was proposed that there be an Arab state – they didn't say Palestinian state, but rather Arab state – and a Jewish state. The Jews agreed, the Arabs refused. Because the matter was not at that time, nor is it today, the question of a Palestinian state, but rather was and remains, unfortunately, the Jewish state. And even before 1967, for 19 years, they had us in a chokehold; there was a stranglehold around us with the sole goal of uprooting us, of extinguishing our lives. What was that about ?

There were no territories then either. There was no occupation, unless Tel Aviv is occupied and Jaffa is occupied. **There were no settlements for 46 years, from 1921 to 1967, nearly half a century.** We were excoriated by the Arab public unrelated to settlements, unrelated to what is presented as the historic heart of the struggle. I say these things because I can – well, so it ended there, but later everything changed .

Later on, events developed as they developed. We withdrew from Gaza, every last centimeter. We uprooted communities and the attacks against us continued – approximately 10,000 missiles were fired at us from Gazan territory, from territories from which we withdrew. And when we ask those who launch the missiles and those who stand behind them: why do you fire at Jews? They say: in order to free Palestine. And what is Palestine? Judea and Samaria? No. Of course, they are part of it, but they say: Beer Sheva and Ashkelon, Majdal and Acre and Jaffa .

Fine, those who say such things belong to Hamas or Islamic Jihad, but the more moderate elements in Judea and Samaria, the Palestinian Authority – it is true that they do not engage in terror and this is an important distinction. They do not engage in terror, but when they are asked to say: Well, do you recognize? Not in Judea and Samaria, not in the West Bank, but are you ready finally to recognize the Jewish state? They answer: We are prepared to recognize the Israeli people; we are ready to recognize Israel. I say, that is not the question I am asking: **Are you prepared to recognize the Jewish state, the nation state of the Jewish people? And the answer so far has been no.** Why not?

During my speech here four years ago, I said that **the solution is a demilitarized Palestinian state.** The reason for demilitarization is clear to everyone in light of our experience – true and ongoing demilitarization with very clear security arrangements and no international forces. But a Jewish state – recognize the Jewish state .

Why are you not willing to recognize the Jewish state? **We are willing to recognize your nation state, and that is at great cost** – it involves territories, our ancestral lands, which is not insignificant. And I say this as well – this is a very difficult thing. But **you need to make a series of concessions too and the first concession is to give up your dream of the right of return. We will not be satisfied with recognition of the Israeli people or of some kind of binational state which will later be flooded by refugees.**

This is the nation state of the Jewish people. If they want, Jews immigrate to this country. Palestinian Arabs, if they want, will go there. Recognize the Jewish state. As long as you refuse to do so, there will never be peace. **Recognize our right to live here in our own sovereign state, our nation state – only then will peace be possible.**

I emphasize this here – this is an essential condition. There are other conditions important for concluding the negotiations – not for conducting negotiations, but for concluding them, but I mention this because the political process with the Palestinians involves resolving complicated problems. It will be deemed successful only if it is built on the foundations of truth, the truth of the present and historic truth and unfortunately, the truth that is under constant attack from our enemies and opponents. They try to undermine the ancient connection of our people with the Land of Israel and obfuscate the basic facts of the conflict between us and the Palestinians in the 20th century.

For example, several days ago, I heard Iran's representative half-heartedly comment on the Nazi crimes – it is difficult for them to say Holocaust – but immediately he added vigorously that one shouldn't allow the Zionists to take advantage of the Nazi

crimes, i.e. the Holocaust, in order to harm the Palestinians. Iran's representatives repeat time and again the familiar trope that the Holocaust occurred without any connection to the Palestinian question and only later the Zionist leaders came along and made use of the Holocaust to repress the Palestinians .

Well, what are the facts? The undisputed leader of the Palestinian national movement in the first half of the 20th century was Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini. The Mufti was the living sprit behind those same attacks I described, from 1921 in Jaffa through the Second World War .

All this is known, but here are some facts about the Mufti's activities that are less well known:

On November 28, 1941, the Mufti flew to Berlin and met with Hitler. He expressed to Hitler his readiness to cooperate with Germany in any way. And he did so – both by recruiting Muslim fighters to join the ranks of the S.S. in the Balkans and by broadcasting propaganda for the Nazis.

Here is a typical example of the propaganda broadcast by the Mufti in 1942. I quote, "If England is defeated and its allies overwhelmed, it will provide a final solution to the Jewish question, which in our mind is the greatest danger ".

Between 1942 and 1944, he worked from his base in Berlin and tried to prevent Jews from being saved – in Hungary, Germany, Bulgaria, Croatia – countries which, despite being enslaved to Hitler, allowed the Jews to escape to the Land of Israel and other places. The Mufti protested to the Nazis that they hadn't provided enough resources to prevent the escape of the refugee Jews from the Balkans. In his testimony at the Nuremberg Trials on August 6, 1947, the German commander Wilhelm Melchers said, "The Mufti made his protests known everywhere, in the Bureau of the Foreign Minister and the State Minister and in other headquarters of the S.S." On May 13, 1943, for example, the Mufti submitted a letter to the Nazi Foreign Minister Ribbentrop in which he objected to the understandings Germany made which allowed for the deportation of 4,000 Jewish children from Bulgaria. He asked to see, "everyone," and I quote, "everyone wiped out".

Eichmann's deputy, Dieter Wisliceny, provided the following chilling testimony at Nuremberg: "The Mufti played a role in the decision to destroy the Jews of Europe. The importance of his role cannot be ignored. The Mufti repeatedly proposed to the authorities with whom he was in contact, first and foremost Hitler, Ribbentrop and Himmler, to destroy the European Jews. He saw in that an appropriate solution to the Palestinian question". Wisliceny even provided hearsay evidence that the Mufti was directly involved in the Final Solution. "The Mufti was one of the initiators of the methodical destruction of the Jews of Europe and was a partner and consultant to Eichmann and Hitler on how to execute the plan. He was one of Eichmann's best friends and constantly pushed him to speed up the destruction. With my own ears," he said, "I heard him say that he visited the gas chambers of Auschwitz anonymously in the company of Eichmann".

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As opposed to the things being said by Iran's representatives and others, the Zionist leaders did not use the Holocaust to destroy the Palestinian national movement. On the contrary, the most senior Palestinian leader at the time, the Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini preached and acted to implement the Holocaust in order to destroy the Zionist movement. It almost worked. European Jewry was indeed wiped out, in part because of the Mufti's efforts, but Zionism was not wiped out and the State of Israel was established.

I mention these things here because these roots, this poisonous tumor, must be uprooted. The Mufti is still an admired figure in the Palestinian national movement. Go look at websites, go to schools, look at schoolbooks. This is the tumor that must be removed, this is the root of the conflict, this is what keeps it alive and the root of the conflict was and remains that which has been repeated for over 90 years – the profound objection by the hard core of Palestinians to the right of the Jewish people to its own country in the Land of Israel. In order for the current process to be significant, in order for it to have a real chance for success, it is essential that we finally hear from the Palestinian leadership that it recognizes the right of the Jewish people to its own country, the State of Israel. I very much hope that it will happen so that we can move toward a real resolution of the conflict.

There are many other subjects that we will of course have to resolve during the negotiations. First and foremost, **there must be a real and sustainable solution to Israel's security needs in the unstable and dangerous region in which live**, because even if we do achieve this recognition, after years of incitement that still continues, we have no assurance that this recognition will filter down into all levels of Palestinian society and that is why we need very solid security arrangements, so that we will be able to defend the peace and defend ourselves if the peace is violated. This is a realistic and responsible approach, one that is ready to move forward but not blindly.

This reminds me of another issue. **I think an essential condition for reaching a genuine resolution clearly was and remains the reversal of the refusal to recognize the right of the Jews to a nation state of their own in the land of their ancestors** and this too is the most important key to resolving the conflict, recognition of this right.

I believe in the power of the people of Israel and I believe in the power of the State of Israel. What we have accomplished over the last 65 years is indeed wondrous. Today we mark 40 years since the Yom Kippur War. In the ensuing 40 years, the population of Israel has increased two-and-a-half fold. Israel's GNP has increased 25 times. That is like taking 25 economies of the State of Israel and placing them side by side. We can mark achievements in all fields – in immigrant absorption, immigration, technology, freeing up the economy, developing the Negev and the Galilee, in the cyber city we are building in Beer Sheva, in the biotech city which will be established now in Safed, which is rising before our very eyes.

These are tremendous things. We did not wait for our neighbors in order to develop our country. We continue to do so. There is a connection between the two things – as long as we continue to grow our power, as long as we fortify our country, as long as we build our economy, as long as we strengthen our society, as long as we are

strong – there is a chance that this change will also occur among our neighbors. We cannot give up on this – it is essential for safeguarding our future and ensuring our safety.

Thank you.