

## **John Kerry, Secretary of State: Remarks at the American Jewish Committee<sup>1</sup> Global Forum**

**Washington, DC, June 3, 2013**

*In einer aufsehenerregenden Rede vor dem „American Jewish Committee“ betont US-Außenminister John Kerry, dass die nächsten Tage „diktieren“ würden, ob die Zwei-Staaten-Lösung noch eine Chance habe. „Wenn wir jetzt keinen Erfolg haben, dürften wir keine zweite Chance haben.“ Dann werde die „heimtückische Kampagne zur Delegitimierung Israels“ an Fahrt gewinnen. In den vergangenen 30 Jahren habe er alle Argumente gehört, warum die Beendigung des Konflikts so schwer sei. Ohne seine Regelung müsse sich Israel zwischen einem jüdischen und einem demokratischen Staat entscheiden. Kerry wiederholt die unverbrüchliche Verpflichtung für Israels Sicherheit, fügt jedoch an, dass diejenigen sich etwas vormachen, die glauben, dass der Sicherheitszaun dafür Sorge. Er betont, dass die Hilfe zur wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung in der Westbank, die er auf dem Weltwirtschaftsforum in Genf angekündigt, kein Ersatz für den Frieden sei.*

SECRETARY KERRY: Thank you. Thank you very, very much. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you all. Thank you for a wonderful, warm welcome here at AJC. And thank you, Bob, for that wonderful introduction. Thank you for your more than four decades of extraordinary service to the AJC, including the last three years as president.

I understand that in order to meet my schedule, because I'm rushing up to New York to celebrate Henry Kissinger's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday – (applause) – remarkable. So, as a result of that I understand that the tribute to Bob had to be removed until after my remarks in order to accommodate my schedule. I truly appreciate that. And Bob, I hope that you will follow in the great tradition of presidents on their last day in office and grant me your pardon. (Laughter.) Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Das Transkript des State Department spricht irrtümlich von der „American Jewish Community“.

So it is a great pleasure to be here. I just bumped into a bunch of folks from Massachusetts, and I'm glad to meet with them. And Justice Breyer is here somewhere. I saw him a few minutes ago on TV, wounded as he is, but strong in spirit, a fellow cyclist who was injured cycling, but don't hold that against us.

And I want to join with Bob, if I can, just for a minute, to acknowledge the passing of a great friend of mine, a great friend of Israel, a champion of the American Jewish community, and that's Senator Frank Lautenberg. He was just a special guy. I got to know him particularly well because I traveled down to Rio to the first Earth Summit with him in 1990 in his first round in the Senate before he retired, which he wasn't able to be held to and came back.

Frank was a funny, funny man, a great sense of humor, but a dedicated person. He was a son of immigrants who first put on the uniform of the United States Armed Forces at the age of 18, and as we all know, he passed away this morning, the last World War II veteran serving in the United States Senate.

In the Senate, he wrote laws helping refugees of all faiths escape persecution. He banned foreign aid to state sponsors of terrorism. And he made sure that victims of terror were able to find justice in this world. He was always committed to public service. He was a loyal friend of everybody here and of people all over the world that he never met, and we will all miss the service of a man like Frank Lautenberg. (Applause.)

I want to thank the leadership and the membership of the AJC and the Jacob Blaustein Institute – Bob, David Harris, who over nearly a quarter of a century has helped to shape this distinguished organization like no one else, and of course your new president, Stan Bergman.

I thank you, every single one of you, for all that you do for Israel, but more for human rights, for civil rights around the world, for women's rights, in fighting racism, religious intolerance, and torture. Thank you for all that you do to fight anti-Semitism around the world. I'm proud that I just appointed Ira Forman to lead that fight against anti-Semitism from the State Department, and you have a very strong partner in Ira. And of course, I thank you for what you do for the American Jewish community.

As many of you might know – if you don't I tell you now – my brother Cam is a proud member of the community. He converted to Judaism 30 years ago before marrying his wife, Kathy. And this morning I'm proud to say he started as Acting Secretary of Commerce – the Commerce Department – and I'm told that today we become the first ever two brothers to lead Cabinet-level agencies at the same time. (Applause.)

When the Psalmist wrote the hymn, [in Hebrew] – (laughter) – “How good and pleasing it is for brothers to sit together in unity” – (laughter) – I'm pretty sure he wasn't picturing us sitting together in the Cabinet Room of the White House – (laughter) – though our mother may well have. (Laughter.) Either way, I can tell you that it will be an honor to serve alongside my brother Cam, even if it's just for a short while.

For more than a century, AJC has been a partner and a pioneer in defining the relationship between American Jews and Israel, and a leader in strengthening that relationship. You've built bridges during difficult times and hopeful ones alike, and we've seen them all in this journey.

I know many look at the landscape today and you're not inclined to act – somehow too risky, too much turmoil. There are a lot of people who are quick to call this moment too difficult a time, too dangerous,

too daunting a time. I understand that temptation, and I full recognize the challenges and the predicament in which Israel finds itself. But I also firmly believe that this is a hopeful time. If we choose to make it so, this can actually be a time of possibility and a time of promise. And with your help, it can be a time of peace.

Now I know there is no issue so close to your hearts as the future of Israel's security. The threat from Iran, the unrest in Syria, the questions surrounding nuclear weapons and chemical weapons, the lingering fallout of the Arab Spring, the status of a peace process that is hardly a process at all – all of these matter tremendously to each and every one of you, and they matter above all to Israel's future. And Israel's future is what I want to talk to you about today.

I had the great honor of becoming Secretary of State in February. I visited Israel in March, April, and May, and I will be back soon. (Applause.) And each time that I go, the deep personal connection that I feel with the state and the people of Israel is only strengthened. These are actually bonds that reach back into my own family tree, including relatives I never met and never knew about until the last decade, relatives who perished in the Holocaust, relatives I thought about in new and personal ways on Yom HaShoah when I laid a wreath on behalf of the United States at Yad Vashem. And it was an extraordinary privilege to spend that day alongside survivors and veterans and to sit at that ceremony between President Peres on one side and Prime Minister Netanyahu on the other, the father of the State of Israel and a man who I believe can lead Israel into a new era that we very much want to see.

These personal bonds have been reinforced during quiet walks through the sacred spaces of Jerusalem, and in the nervous neighborhoods of Sderot, and through the bustle of downtown Tel Aviv. These are bonds that I felt on my first trip to Israel in 1986, almost 30 years ago, with my friend Lenny Zakim and a group of 15

Jewish friends from Massachusetts. I stood atop the spectacular summit of Masada, which we climbed up, where 2,000 years ago 1,000 martyrs made the ultimate sacrifice in unison and in the name of defending the ancestral homeland of the Jewish people. We together, all 16 of us, looked out across the desert, across the crest of that precipice at the top of the mountain, across the Dead Sea, the vast desert below, standing in the very spot where every new soldier begins his or her service by swearing an oath to honor the history of the people of Israel and defend the future of their State.

Our guide, a wonderful man named Yavin – Yavin Roman – instructed us after a long discussion about what had happened or not happened and how the history had played out, and how Josephus Flavius had written it, and whether it was accurate. We had a big debate. In the end we took a vote, and we all voted that what had happened had happened the way it was described. And he instructed us to stand at that precipice and call out across the chasm, to yell: “Am Yisrael Chai!” We did it together: “The people of Israel live! The State of Israel lives!” (Applause.)

And we shouted, and then we listened. And we actually heard our voices bouncing off the cavern on the other side of the mountains, and they came back to us, and it was really as if, eerily, it was the voices of those who had fought coming back to us, the voices of past generations.

These bonds I share with Israel and all of its modern-day challenges, and they were strengthened each time that I got to see the State. Once, I got to see the State from the air, when someone actually let me fly an Israeli Air Force jet across the Negev. (Laughter.) It was on that unforgettable flight from the Ovda Air Base, from the luncheon we were having, when the colonel came back an ace from the war in '67. He said, “Senator, I hope you haven’t eat too much. We go flying.” (Laughter.) So I said, “Sounds good to me,” and we left

everybody, we jumped in the jet, and he said, “The minute we’re off the airport, the jet’s yours; you take it wherever you want.”

(Laughter.)

So we took out of the airbase just north of Eilat and I got to see with my own eyes how narrow the borders of Israel are, and just how vulnerable Israel’s security is. There’s simply no margin for error, and I understood that. And in a matter of minutes, as I flew that jet, at one point my pilot in the back seat turned – he radioed to me and he says, “Senator, you are about to go over Egypt. Turn.” (Laughter.) So I fly over very quickly. I came close that day to violating the airspaces of both Egypt and Jordan. (Laughter.)

And as I flew over the Negev, I turned the plane upside down to do a little aerobatics, and I saw the sky below me – above me and the Earth below, and it was really weird. And I thought to myself, wow, finally I am seeing the Middle East clearly, upside down. (Laughter.)

These days, folks, our American Air Force pilots do not let me take the controls of the aircraft, much to the relief of the passengers. (Laughter.) But I want to share with you that when we touch down in Tel Aviv and I walk down the steps of that blue-and-white plane that says “United States of America” on the side, I carry with me the commitment of President Obama, whose Administration, I am proud to say, has done more than any before to ensure that Israel’s future is strong and prosperous. Never has our security agreement been as great. (Applause.)

Make no mistake: The President of the United States and I share your unshakeable commitment to Israel’s security. And every time we land at Ben Gurion, I think of the words of one of the most prominent successors of Ben Gurion, and that’s Golda Meir. She said, “We only want that which is given naturally to all peoples of the world: to be masters of our own fate, not of others’.”

Central to Israel's founding is the belief that this State and the Jewish people must be able to control their own destiny. And that is why and how Israel has built this thriving democracy. It is why Israel made the desert bloom and built a modern economy. It's why Israel has built one of the strongest militaries on the planet, and why it has always shown such a strength in the face of terrorism and existential threats.

And as we look ahead, I believe – and I think you will agree, I believe you will agree – that the best way to truly ensure Israel's security today and for future generations is by ending once and for all the conflict with the Palestinians, by summoning the courage to achieve peace, and by reaching a negotiated resolution that results in two states for two peoples, each able to fulfill their legitimate national aspirations in a homeland of their own. We are all committed to that. (Applause.)

So I come here today to affirm to all of you that we are deeply committed to Israel's security. And I understand what it means when Prime Minister Netanyahu looks me in the eye and says, "I have to guarantee the security of my country." I understand that, and he does, and he will. But what does that security look like? Certainly it's more than simply the absence of war. For Israel, a nation with history and challenges unlike any other, it means secure – and being secure in its future as a Jewish state, but also a democratic state, also an economically thriving state. Security for Israel means freedom from pernicious attacks on its legitimacy from its neighbors or on the world stage. Security for Israel grows with the empowerment of moderates in the West Bank and Gaza and throughout the region so that extremists are isolated rather than promoted and empowered. And lasting security for Israel requires regional stability and open markets that will let Israelis concentrate on building up their businesses and not just their defenses.

You and I both know that the place where all of this happens best is in a strong, secure Israel that lives peacefully alongside a viable Palestinian state. I will tell you here today, examine every possibility, all of the parameters of this conflict, this frozen conflict, and I will tell you a realistic one-state solution simply does not exist for either side. (Applause.)

My friends, I have been traveling to Israel as Secretary of State now for just the last three months, but I have been involved intimately in these challenges for the last three decades. And as you know, I come to this issue not as a stranger, but as a friend, as a proven friend over 30 years or more. I've gotten to know every Israeli prime minister since Shamir, and many of the kings, princes and presidents who have ruled in the Arab world over the last 30 years. In that time, I have heard all of the arguments for why it is too difficult to end this conflict. And I know some of you are skeptical. I understand where that comes from. And some people are beyond skeptical; they're even cynical. I know it's hard. After all, there's a reason why this problem hasn't been solved yet.

I understand the disappointments that we've felt, from Madrid to Oslo to Wye River and Camp David and Annapolis. And I know that many talented leaders have worked tirelessly for peace without realizing the ultimate goal. I remember sitting in Ramallah once, having lunch with Arafat – President Arafat during a major point of conflict, and during the course of the lunch he looked at me as I talked about the Taba negotiations and he said, "You know, that is my great regret. I should have said yes." Well, I don't think we can live for regrets now. I don't think we have that opportunity. I still believe that peace is achievable, and more than ever, I know that it's worth fighting for. We all know. (Applause.)

We also all know cynicism has never solved anything. It's never given birth to a state, and it won't. Challenges are not met by giving



in to doubts. Israel has only gotten this far because brave people were willing to defy the odds and ignore the conventional wisdom, and actually overcome obstacles. How else could you make fertile land out of the desert and do what Israel has done? Why should we start – why should any Israeli start – giving in to that cynicism now?

I believe that if we care about the future of Israel – as I do, and I know you do – and if we understand what is at stake, we should recognize that this time is, in fact, a significant opportunity, and it is more than that, it is a responsibility.

Now, some say that in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, it's too messy, it's too uncertain. But in reality, the dawn of a new era in the region is exactly the kind of time to recast Israel's relationships, to change the narrative with a new generation that is starting to make its voice heard.

Now, some are wary because of Israel's experience following the withdrawal of Gaza and Lebanon. You have no idea how many times I hear people say, "We withdrew from Lebanon, we withdrew from Gaza, and what did we get? We got rockets." Well, folks, it's worth remembering these withdrawals were unilateral. They were not part of a negotiated peace treaty that included strong guarantees for Israel's security, and they certainly weren't part of a peace agreement that agrees to be a demilitarized state or entity.

We know that peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, on the other hand, which were bilateral, yielded a much better result for Israel. And Egypt today is, in fact, enforcing the Gaza peace agreement to the best of their ability, the Gaza ceasefire, and working diligently on the issue of Sinai security and so forth. We know that any peace agreement with the Palestinians will need to include extensive, mutually agreed security arrangements in order to ensure a

Palestinian state that does not become the launching site for future attacks against Israel.

And of course, Israel's fundamental security concerns have to be answered affirmatively, including the threat of Hezbollah, a dangerous terrorist puppet of Iran that has amassed rockets and attacked Israel – and of course, Iran itself is involved in this. So let me repeat: The United States will prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. (Applause.) It is not prevention. It is no weapon, no containment; prevention. (Applause.)

Now, I ask you to also understand that at the same time as I stand here a friend of Israel, at the same time as I have a 29-year, 100 percent voting record, I can also stand here and tell you that we must recognize the Palestinians' fundamental aspirations – to live in peace in their own state with its own clear borders – that has to be our mission as well. (Applause.) And I assure you, I assure you that a stable Palestinian state with assured borders and a flourishing economy will only strengthen Israel's security and Israel's future.

The Palestinian children that I've seen – I went into Gaza a number of years ago, five years ago, and the kids I saw playing in the rubble there, they should be able to grow up with playgrounds that aren't made of the debris of bombed-out buildings. Their parents deserve to be able to live their daily lives the way people everywhere else in the world do and the way parents aspire to hopes for their children do. And these families' lives should not be determined by terrorists in their midst.

And though I emphasize that it is not a substitute for peace – believe me, not a substitute – Palestinians also deserve to see their daily lives grow and the benefits of economic growth and development. And that is why last weekend at the Dead Sea I described an economic investment initiative for the Palestinian Territories led by

Quartet Representative Tony Blair that will be different in scope and in process than anything that has preceded it.

We know that this conflict, my friends, is not the cause of problems in the Middle East. Indeed, it has often been used as a convenient excuse for autocrats who didn't want their own populations to recognize and wrestle with the inadequacies of their own governance. An excuse.

But make no mistake: Resolving this conflict for both sides can have far-reaching benefits that will be in everybody's interest. And the reverse is also true: Not resolving this will result in serious consequences for both.

I understand that many of you are asking, "Ma Nishtana?" (Laughter.) "What makes this different from every other time?"

Well, the difference is that what happens in the coming days will actually dictate what happens in the coming decades. We're running out of time. We're running out of possibilities. And let's be clear: If we do not succeed now – and I know I'm raising those stakes – but if we do not succeed now, we may not get another chance. So we can't let the disappointments of the past hold the future prisoner. We can't let the absence of peace become a self-fulfilling prophesy. The absence of peace is perpetual conflict.

So I want to ask you this: Whenever you think about this challenge and how hard it is, think about what will happen if it doesn't work. We will find ourselves in a negative spiral of responses and counter-responses that could literally slam the door on a two-state solution, having already agreed, I think, that there isn't a one-state one. And the insidious campaign to de-legitimize Israel will only gain steam. Israel will be left to choose between being a Jewish state or a

democratic state, but it will not be able to fulfill the founders' visions of being both at once.

And the consequences of failure do not live only in the distant future. This is not some far-off concern, my friends. There are also some very real short-term consequences to consider because the status quo is simply not sustainable. (Applause.)

A stalemate today will not remain one tomorrow. What is static today will not be static tomorrow because it has been so for so long and it cannot remain so given the options. In this conflict, the simple fact is tomorrow is not guaranteed to look like today. And the people who think somehow because there is a fence and because there's been greater security and fewer people hurt are lulling themselves into a delusion that that somehow can be sustained. It cannot be.

And think about what could happen next door. The Palestinian Authority has committed itself to a policy of nonviolence. They are the only entity out there in that region that has committed themselves to nonviolence. Think of the cost of that. And think of what they have done to try to build institutions, a security arrangement, a democracy, a prime ministership, growth in the Palestinian economy. The fact that last year, up until recently, not one Israeli died from anything that happened from the West Bank until there was a settler killed about a month ago. Salam Fayyad did an extraordinary job of building both the Palestinian Security Forces and the institutions of a viable state. But that's not just the work of one man. We look forward to continuing these efforts with new Prime Minister Dr. Rami Hamdallah.

But if that experiment is allowed to fail, ask yourselves: What will replace it? What will happen if the Palestinian economy implodes, if the Palestinian Security Forces dissolve, if the Palestinian Authority fails? Surely something much worse for Israel's interests and for

America's and for the region. In fact, the failure of the moderate Palestinian leadership could very well invite the rise of the very thing that we want to avoid: the same extremism in the West Bank that we have seen in Gaza or from southern Lebanon.

So before anyone gives up on this hope, we have to ask whether we are prepared to live with permanent conflict, with the possibility of widespread civil disobedience, with the possibility of a civil rights movement that grows in the West Bank, with the possibility of another intifada always looming around the corner. If the parties don't agree to come back to the table, the Palestinians have already said that they will go to the UN and seek to join more UN organizations, where, despite the best efforts of the United States, they will probably get more votes in their favor than they got last time. And last time, we only got nine votes against. And the Palestinians have also threatened to take their case to the International Criminal Court.

Yes, the United States of America will always have Israel's back. We will always stand up for Israel's security. But wouldn't we both be stronger if we had some more company? With the right choices and enough courage and determination, there is a very different future possible for Israel.

So I ask you today, don't just look at what may happen that's negative; look at the possibilities. I ask you to recognize that this time can be different, but this time it actually has to be. People have spent so much time lamenting what hasn't worked in the past that I believe we've actually forgotten to focus on what the future could look like if we do keep faith.

Think of the security benefits: an Israel where schoolchildren actually run around a playground without having to run into bunkers and shelters to escape the incoming rocket fire. I've been to Sderot. I've seen those hundreds of casings that are displayed there that have

been fired out of Gaza. I went to Kiryat Shmona up in the north and went into a bunker where kids had to hide from the Katyusha rockets coming in from Lebanon. I know that fear. We can see a difference where you have a world where extremists and their state sponsors can no longer use this festering conflict as an excuse or a rallying cry for any number of hidden agendas. And we could see an Iran that is increasingly isolated.

And think of the economic benefits for the average Israeli citizen. The governor of the Bank of Israel said a peace agreement with the Palestinians could boost Israel's GDP by as much as 6 percent. An agreement with the Palestinians that resulted in the normalization of relations with the Arab world, promised by the Arab Peace Initiative, would end the Arab League boycott of Israeli goods, open huge new markets for Israel, bring new foreign investment and business opportunities to Israel. And imagine the possibilities, if you had peace, of the extraordinary array of religious sites that suddenly become available from Jordan through the West Bank and into Israel. The end of political and logistical barriers could turn Tel Aviv into a global hub for international finance and technology. And the possibilities for tourism, as I mentioned, are simply extraordinary, an area where Israel actually currently underperforms its potential and other countries in the region. They're limitless with a rich collection of historical, archaeological, religious sites, as well as the modern attractions.

My friends, quite simply, peace pays. And Israel's vibrant society and economy and its scientific and technological achievements, all of them would suddenly receive a recognition that they deserve on the world stage with the barriers broken down and the ability to move within the region, with embassies, with recognition, with governments, with peace. That is what the future actually could produce. As the Bible says, "There is a future for the man of peace."

And as men and women of peace, that is the future that we need to pursue.

Now, I've asked you to think today about what happens if this fails. And I've asked you to think about what happens if this succeeds. The third thing I want to ask you to think about today is probably the most important. I want you to do more than just consider the consequences. I ask you to recognize that you have a part to play in choosing which future will become our own. You should also know that you're not going to be alone. The Arab League came here to Washington, and they've just shown that they are ready to take steps forward, because they reaffirmed the Arab Peace Initiative, but they did so differently than ever before. They added that it will have land swaps for the first time.

In fact, everywhere I go – literally, China, Japan – foreign ministers, presidents raise this issue. Young people ask me about this conflict and what they can do to help end it. In the last couple of weeks I had visits here from the Foreign Minister of Brazil and the Foreign Minister of New Zealand, and the first thing out of their mouth was, "How can we help on the Middle East peace process?" Now, I asked them, "Where's that coming from? You're over in New Zealand and this is the first thing on your mind?" They said yes because it affects all of the recruitment and all of the arguments and radicalism that we face, and they see the prospects and possibilities. Everyone is invested in a resolution and everyone has a role to play.

My many conversations have led me to believe that both Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas can be partners in peace. And I know Minister Tzipi Livni, who is here, believes in peace, and she is working hard to help move this process forward. And she is a friend and a valued colleague in this effort to move forward, and I know you will hear from her later. And I thank her for her genuine efforts to try to think differently and act differently at this moment.

She shares the vision of an Israel that is made stronger through a peace agreement that ensures its security. And she is committed to working to make that a reality. All of these leaders are committed. We're all committed.

So no one has a stronger voice in this than the American Jewish community. You can play a critical part in ensuring Israel's long-term security. And as President Obama said in Jerusalem, leaders will take bold steps only if their people push them to. You can help shape the future of this process. And in the end, you can help Israel direct its destiny and be masters of its own fate, just as Prime Minister Meir dreamed that it would be.

So I ask you today, send the message that you are behind this hopeful vision of what can be. Let your leaders and your neighbors alike know that you understand this will be a tough process with tough decisions, but that you're ready to back the leaders who make them. For your children, do this; for your grandchildren, do this; for Israeli children and Palestinian children and for Israel, let them know that you stand behind negotiations that will lead to two states for two peoples living side-by-side in peace and security, and that you are part of the great constituency for peace.

Let the world know that when the next generation of soldiers stand on Masada's mountaintop, when they yell that ancient oath across that chasm, the vast expanses of their homeland – "Am Yisrael Chai" – when they say that, that they too will hear the echoes of past generations just as I heard them, and that they will know that as the echoes ring in their ears, the oath rings truer than ever.

With the commitment of the AJC that you have shown for more than a century, you can help ensure that the State of Israel will indeed live long in peace and security, not in spite of its place alongside a Palestinian state but because of it. You can help make sure the



people of Israel and the State of Israel will continue to thrive, continue to lead, continue to keep faith with its ancestors as it keeps faith with its future. That's what lies in front of us, and I hope together we will seize this moment and make the most of it.

Thank you, and God bless. (Applause.)

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