

Israel's Right to the Land

*A skillful presentation by
U.S. Senator James Inhofe
(R-Oklahoma) on the
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<http://inhofe.senate.gov>

I was interested the other day when I heard that the de facto Saudi ruler, Crown Prince Abdullah, made a statement which was received by many in this country as if it were a statement of fact, as if it were something new, a concept for peace in the Middle East that no one had ever heard of before. I was kind of shocked that it was so well received by many people who had been down this road before.

I suggest to you that what Crown Prince Abdullah talked about a few days ago was not new at all. He talked about the fact that under the Abdullah plan, Arabs would normalize relations with Israel in exchange for the Jewish state surrendering the territory it received after the Six Day War, as if that were something new...

[But] there isn't anything new about the prospect of giving up land that is rightfully Israel's land in order to have peace. When it gets right down to it, the land doesn't make that much difference, because Yasser Arafat and others don't recognize Israel's right to any of the land. They do not recognize Israel's right to exist.

I will discuss seven reasons why Israel is entitled to the land they have and that it should not be a part of the peace process. If this is something that Israel wants to do, it is their business to do it.

But anyone who has tried to put the pressure on Israel to do this is wrong.

We are going to be hit by skeptics who are going to say we will be attacked because of our support for Israel, and if we get out of the Middle East -- that is us -- all the problems will go away. That is just not true. If we withdraw, all of these problems will again come to our door. I have some observations to make about that.

But I would like to reemphasize once again the seven reasons that Israel has the right to their land.

1) ARCHEOLOGY

The first reason is that Israel has the right to the land because of all of the archeological evidence. All the archeological evidence supports it. Every time there is a dig in Israel, it does nothing but support the fact that Israelis have had a presence there for 3,000 years. The coins, the cities, the pottery, the culture -- there are other people, groups that are there, but there is no mistaking the fact that Israelis have been present in that land for 3,000 years. It predates any claims that other peoples in the region may have.

The ancient Philistines are extinct. Many other ancient peoples are extinct. They do not have the unbroken line to this date that the Israelis have. Even the Egyptians of today are not racial Egyptians of 2,000, 3,000 years ago. They are primarily an Arab people. The land is called Egypt, but they are not the same racial and ethnic stock as the old Egyptians of the ancient world.

The Israelis are in fact descended from the original Israelites.

2) HISTORY

The second proof of Israel's right to the land is the historic right. History supports it totally and completely. We know there has been an Israel up until the time of the Roman Empire. The Romans conquered the land. Israel had no homeland, although Jews were allowed to live there. They were driven from the land in two dispersions: One in 70 A.D. and the other in 135 A.D. But there was always a Jewish presence in the land.

The Turks, who took over about 700 years ago and ruled the land up until about World War One, had control. Then the land was conquered by the British. The Turks entered World War One on the side of Germany. The British knew they had to do something to punish Turkey, and also to break up that empire that was going to be a part of the whole effort of Germany in World War One. So the British sent troops against the Turks in the Holy Land.

One of the generals who was leading the British armies was a man named Allenby. Allenby was a Bible-believing Christian. He carried a Bible with him everywhere he went and he knew the significance of Jerusalem. The night before the attack against Jerusalem to drive out the Turks, Allenby prayed that God would allow him to capture the city without doing damage to the holy places.

That day, Allenby sent World War One biplanes over the city of Jerusalem to do a reconnaissance mission. You have to understand that the Turks had at that time never seen an airplane. So there they were, flying around. They looked in the sky and saw these fascinating inventions and did not know what they were, and they were terrified by them.

Then they were told they were going to be opposed by a man named Allenby the next day, which means, in their language,

“man sent from God” or “prophet from God.” They dared not fight against a prophet from God, so the next morning, when Allenby went to take Jerusalem, he went in and captured it without firing a single shot.

The British government was grateful to Jewish people around the world, particularly to one Jewish chemist who helped them manufacture niter. Niter is an ingredient that was used in nitroglycerin which was sent over from the New World. But they did not have a way of getting it to England. The German U-boats were shooting on the boats, so most of the niter they were trying to import to make nitroglycerin was at the bottom of the ocean. But a man named Weitzman, a Jewish chemist, discovered a way to make it from materials that existed in England. As a result, they were able to continue that supply.

The British at that time said they were going to give the Jewish people a homeland. That is all written down in history. They were gratified that the Jewish people, the bankers, came through and helped finance the war.

The homeland that Britain said it would set aside consisted of all of what is now Israel and all of what was then the nation of Jordan -- the whole thing. That was what Britain promised to give the Jews in 1917. In the beginning, there was some Arab support for this action. There was not a huge Arab population in the land at that time, and there is a reason for that. The land was not able to sustain a large population of people. It just did not have the development it needed to handle those people, and nobody really wanted this land. It was considered to be worthless land.

Mark Twain -- Samuel Clemens -- took a tour of Palestine in 1867. This is how he described that land. We are talking about Israel now. He said: “A desolate country whose soil is rich enough but is given over wholly to weeds. A silent, mournful expanse. We

never saw a human being on the whole route. There was hardly a tree or a shrub anywhere. Even the olive and the cactus, those fast friends of a worthless soil, had almost deserted the country.”

Where was this great Palestinian nation? It did not exist. It was not there. Palestinians were not there. Palestine was a region named by the Romans, but at that time it was under the control of Turkey, and there was no large mass of people there because the land would not support them.

This is the report that the Palestinian Royal Commission, created by the British, made. It quotes an account of the conditions on the coastal plain along the Mediterranean Sea in 1913. The Palestinian Royal Commission said:

“The road leading from Gaza to the north was only a summer track, suitable for transport by camels or carts. No orange groves, orchards or vineyards were to be seen until one reached the Yavnev village. Houses were mud. Schools did not exist. The western part toward the sea was almost a desert. The villages in this area were few and thinly populated. Many villages were deserted by their inhabitants.”

That was 1913.

The French author Voltaire described Palestine as “a hopeless, dreary place.” In short, under the Turks the land suffered from neglect and low population. That is a historic fact. The nation became populated by both Jews and Arabs because the land came to prosper when Jews came back and began to reclaim it. If there had never been any archaeological evidence to support the rights of the Israelis to the territory, it is also important to recognize that other nations in the area have no longstanding claim to the country either.

Did you know that Saudi Arabia was not created until 1913, Lebanon until 1920? Iraq did not exist as a nation until 1932, Syria until 1941. The borders of Jordan were established in 1946 and Kuwait in 1961. Any of these nations that would say Israel is only a recent arrival would have to deny their own rights as recent arrivals as well. They did not exist as countries. They were all under the control of the Turks.

Historically, Israel gained its independence in 1948.

3) AGRICULTURE

The third reason that land belongs to Israel is the practical value of the Israelis being there. Israel today is a modern marvel of agriculture. Israelis able to bring more food out of a desert environment than any other country in the world. The Arab nations ought to make Israel their friend and import technology from Israel that would allow all the Middle East, not just Israel, to become an exporter of food. Israel has unarguable success in its agriculture.

4) HUMANITARIAN

The fourth reason I believe Israel has the right to the land is on the grounds of humanitarian concern. You see, there were 6 million Jews slaughtered in Europe during World War Two. The persecution against the Jews had been very strong in Russia since the advent of communism, and before then under the Czars.

These people have a right to their homeland. If we are not going to allow them a homeland in the Middle East, then where? What other nation on Earth is going to cede territory, is going to give up land?

They are not asking for a great deal. The whole nation of Israel would fit into my home state of Oklahoma seven times. They are not asking for a great deal. The whole nation of Israel is very small. It is a nation that, up until the time that claims started coming in, was not desired by anybody.

5) STRATEGIC ALLY

The fifth reason Israel ought to have their land is that she is a strategic ally of the United States. Whether we realize it or not, Israel is an impediment to certain groups hostile to democracies and hostile to what we believe in, hostile to that which makes us the greatest nation in the history of the world. They have kept them from taking complete control of the Middle East. If it were not for Israel, they would overrun the region.

They are our strategic ally. It is good to know we have a friend in the Middle East on whom we can count. They vote with us in the United Nations more than England, more than Canada, more than France, more than Germany -- more than any other country in the world.

6) ROADBLOCK TO TERRORISM

The sixth reason is that Israel is a roadblock to terrorism. The war we are now facing is not against a sovereign nation; it is against a group of terrorists who are very fluid, moving from one country to another. They are almost invisible. That is whom we are fighting against today. We need every ally we can get. If we do not stop terrorism in the Middle East, it will be on our shores.

One of the reasons I believe the spiritual door was opened for an attack against the United States is that the policy of our government has been to ask the Israelis, and demand it with pressure, not to retaliate in a significant way against the terrorist

strikes that have been launched against them.

Since its independence in 1948, Israel has fought four wars: The 1948 War of Independence, the 1956 Sinai campaign, the 1967 Six Day War, and the 1973 Yom Kippur War. In all four cases, Israel was attacked. They were not the aggressor. Some people may argue that this was not true because they went in first in 1956, but they knew at that time that Egypt was building a huge military to become the aggressor. Israel, in fact, was not the aggressor and has not been the aggressor in any of the four wars.

Also, they won all four wars against impossible odds. They are great warriors. They consider a level playing field being outnumbered 2-to-1.

There were 39 Scud missiles that landed on Israeli soil during the Gulf War. Our president asked Israel not to respond. In order to have the Arab nations on board, we asked Israel not to participate in the war. They showed tremendous restraint and did not. Now we have asked them to stand back and not do anything over these last several attacks. We have criticized them. We have criticized them in our media. Local people in television and radio often criticize Israel, not knowing the true facts. We need to be informed.

I was so thrilled when I heard a reporter pose a question to Secretary of State Cohn Powell. He said: "Mr. Powell, the United States has advocated a policy of restraint in the Middle East. We have discouraged Israel from retaliation again and again and again because we've said that it escalates the violence. Are we going to follow that ourselves?" Mr. Powell indicated we would strike back. In other words, we can tell Israel not to do it, but when it hits us, we are going to do something.

But all that changed in December when the Israelis went into

Gaza with gunships and into the West Bank with F-16s. With the exception of last May, the Israelis had not used F-16s since the Six Day War. And I am so proud of them because we have to stop terrorism. It is not going to go away. If Israel were driven into the sea tomorrow, if every Jew in the Middle East were killed, terrorism would not end. You know that in your heart. Terrorism would continue. It is not just a matter of Israel in the Middle East. It is the heart of the very people who are perpetrating this stuff. Should they be successful in overrunning Israel -- which they won't be -- but should they be, it would not be enough. They will never be satisfied.

7) BIBLICAL RIGHT

I believe very strongly that we ought to support Israel, and that it has a right to the land, because God said so. In Genesis 13:14-17, the Bible says: "The Lord said to Abram, "Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are northward, southward, eastward and westward: for all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed forever... Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it to thee."

That is God talking. The Bible says that Abram removed his tent and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar before the Lord. Hebron is in the West Bank. It is at this place where God appeared to Abram and said, "I am giving you this land" -- the West Bank. This is not a political battle at all. It is a contest over whether or not the word of God is true.

CONCLUSION

The seven reasons, I am convinced, clearly establish that Israel has a right to the land. Eight years ago on the White House lawn,

Yitzhak Rabin shook hands with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat. It was a historic occasion. It was a tragic occasion. At that time, the official policy of the government of Israel began to be, "Let us appease the terrorists. Let us begin to trade the land for peace." This process continued unabated up until last year.

Here in our own nation, at Camp David in the summer of 2000, then-Prime Minister of Israel Ehud Barak offered the most generous concessions to Yasser Arafat that had ever been laid on the table. He offered him more than 90 percent of all the West Bank territory, sovereign control of it. There were some parts he did not want to offer, but in exchange he said he would give up land in Israel proper that the PLO had not even asked for.

And he also did the unthinkable. He even spoke of dividing Jerusalem and allowing of dividing the Palestinians to have their capital there. Yasser Arafat stormed out of the meeting. Why did he storm out of the meeting? Everything he said he wanted was offered there. It was put into his hands. Why did he storm out of the meeting? A couple of months later, there began to be riots, terrorism. The riots began when now-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon went to the Temple Mount. And this was used as the thing that lit the fire and caused the explosion. Did you know that Sharon did not go unannounced and that he contacted the Islamic authorities before he went and secured their permission to be there? It was no surprise.

The response was very carefully calculated. They knew the world would not pay attention to the details. They would portray this in the Arab world as an attack upon the holy mosque and use it as an excuse to riot. Over the last eight years, during this time of the peace process, where the Israeli public has pressured its leaders to give up land for peace because they are tired of fighting, there has been increased terror.

In fact, it has been greater in the last eight years than any other time in Israel's history. Showing restraint and giving in has not produced any kind of peace. It is so much so that today the leftist peace movement in Israel does not exist because the people feel they were deceived. They offered a hand of peace, and it was not taken. That is why the politics of Israel have changed drastically over the past 12 months. The Israelis have come to see that, "No matter what we do, these people do not want to deal with us... They want to destroy us."

That is why even yet today the stationery of the PLO still has upon it the map of the entire state of Israel, not just the little part they call the West Bank. They want it all.

We have to get out of this mindset that somehow you can buy peace in the Middle East by giving little plots of land. It has not worked before when it has been offered.

These seven reasons show why Israelis entitled to that land.

I yield the floor.