

MEMMO

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U.S., Israel Reaffirm Alliance, Focus on Common Goals

President Obama and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's meeting yesterday at the White House reaffirmed the U.S.-Israel alliance and the strong U.S. support for Israel's security. The two leaders pledged to work closely to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran and to advance Israeli-Palestinian and wider Israeli-Arab peace. As the two allies pursue these common goals, the president made clear that Israel's security is "paramount" and that it is in the national security interests of the United States to "assure that Israel's security as a[n] independent Jewish state is maintained."

Obama and Netanyahu reaffirmed the U.S.-Israel alliance and pledged to work closely together to pursue common goals.

- Obama said the positive meeting with Netanyahu and the meetings between their staffs reflect "the extraordinary relationship, the special relationship between the United States and Israel. It is a stalwart ally of the United States. We have historical ties, emotional ties. As the only true democracy in the Middle East, it is a source of admiration and inspiration for the American people."
- The president also praised Netanyahu's "historic vision" and said he "is in a position to achieve the security objectives of Israel, but also bring back historic peace. I'm confident that he's going to seize this moment and the United States is going to do everything we can to be constructive, effective partners in this process."
- Netanyahu thanked the president for his leadership and strong support of Israel, saying, "I have great confidence in your leadership, Mr. President, and your friendship to my country, and in your championing of peace and security. ... And I look forward, Mr. President, to working with you to achieve both."
- Declaring that "everybody in Israel, as in the United States, wants peace," Netanyahu said that he and Obama see "exactly eye-to-eye" on the need to "move simultaneously and in parallel on two fronts: the fronts of peace and the front of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear capability."



President Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu discussed ways to work together to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran and advance Israeli-Arab peace.

Both Obama and Netanyahu recognized the grave threat a nuclear-armed Iran poses to the international community.

- Both the president and prime minister see a nuclear-armed Iran as a major threat not just to Israel, with Obama saying, “Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon would not only be a threat to Israel and a threat to the United States, but would be profoundly destabilizing in the international community as a whole and could set off a nuclear arms race in the Middle East...”
- As the United States continues its efforts to engage Iran diplomatically, the president made clear that the United States would not “talk forever” if Iran does not respond positively to America’s outreach. “We’re not going to create a situation in which the talks become an excuse for inaction while Iran proceeds with developing a nuclear—and deploying a nuclear weapon,” the president said.
- Obama also said that the United States is “not foreclosing a range of steps, including much stronger international sanctions, in assuring that Iran understands that we are serious.” In an interview with *Newsweek* in the run-up to the meeting with the prime minister, Obama said, “I don’t take any options off the table with respect to Iran. I don’t take options off the table when it comes to U.S. security, period.”
- In discussing the Iranian threat, Netanyahu said “there’s never been a time when Arabs and Israelis see a common threat the way we see it today” and called on the Arab states “to join together in working towards peace, while simultaneously defending ourselves against this common threat.”

The president and prime minister said they are committed to advancing Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab peace efforts.

- In reiterating his call for a two-state solution, Obama put new emphasis on the need not only for the Palestinians but also for the Arab states to take important steps before that goal can be achieved.
- He said the “Palestinians are going to have to do a better job providing the kinds of security assurances that Israelis would need to achieve a two-state solution” and that “the leadership of the Palestinians will have to gain ... additional legitimacy and credibility with their own people.” He said the Arab states “have to be more supportive and be bolder in seeking normalization with Israel.”
- The prime minister said he shares the president’s “desire to move the peace process forward” and wants to start negotiations with Palestinians immediately.
- Netanyahu made clear that Israel has no desire to govern the Palestinians and is prepared to make compromises, saying, “We want to live in peace with them. We want them to govern themselves absent a handful of powers that could endanger the state of Israel. ... There’ll have to be compromises by Israelis and Palestinians alike. We’re ready to do our share. We hope the Palestinians will do their share as well.”
- In support of U.S.-Israeli peace efforts, 76 senators sent a letter to President Obama today that strongly backs America’s efforts to help Israel achieve peace with all her neighbors while upholding the principles that have successfully lead to peace treaties between Israel and both Egypt and Jordan. These key principles include supporting direct, bilateral negotiations between the parties, remaining both a trusted mediator between the parties and a devoted friend to Israel, and insisting on an absolute Palestinian commitment to end incitement and violence against Israel.