



# Middle East Spotlight

## **A Vital Message of Support**

The ongoing turmoil in the Middle East and the changing politics in the region pose significant challenges for Israel's security and for America's national interests.

The conflict in Syria has begun destabilizing neighboring countries, as thousands of refugees flee the fighting while terrorist groups move in to fill the power vacuum. And the deteriorating situation raises the possibility that Syria's chemical weapons—the largest stockpile in the region—will fall into the hands of terrorists or be used by the regime in a final act of despair.

Egypt is now ruled by an Islamist president who has cast doubt on al-Qaeda's role in 9/11 and has called for a review of Cairo's 1979 peace treaty with Israel. Iran, meanwhile, continues to move ahead with its nuclear program despite increasingly tough sanctions.

In this explosive environment, Israel remains a stable and dependable American ally. But the Jewish state cannot deal with this environment on its own. Robust American leadership is vital in such turbulent times, and a key way in which this leadership is realized is through foreign aid.

For the upcoming fiscal year, which begins in October, President Obama has requested \$3.1 billion in security assistance for Israel. This aid package is in keeping with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that then-President Bush signed in 2007. Subject to congressional approval, the MOU pledges \$30 billion in security assistance to Israel over a 10-year period.

These funds help Israel handle the growing threats around it, from the vast missile arsenals in the hands of Hamas and Hizballah to terrorist activity emanating from the Sinai Peninsula. They ensure that Israel maintains its qualitative military edge over neighboring militaries, since it must rely on better equipment and training to compensate for a manpower deficit in any potential regional conflict.

American aid does not just ensure that Israel can continue to thrive. It benefits the U.S. as well. Israeli technologies help protect American troops on the battlefield, and sharing of combat experience as well as intelligence between these strategic partners saves the lives of both soldiers and civilians. Moreover, Israeli aid dollars are spent right back here in America. Israel uses 75 percent of the aid it receives in the United States, supporting American jobs.

Through aid to Israel, the United States sends a message to the Jewish state as well as potential adversaries that America's commitment to Israel is unbreakable. As the entire Mideast undergoes a radical and violent upheaval, underscoring both the fragility of Israel's security situation and its importance as the region's sole stable, pro-Western democracy, this message needs to be heard now more than ever.