

Dr. Alan Dershowitz at AIPAC Policy Conference 2010

Transcript

Thank you. Thank you. Wow, what a wonderful conference. What a great show of support for Israel at a critical time.

The world should today be standing in awe and appreciation of Israel's amazing accomplishments and contributions. No country has ever contributed so much to the world in a mere 61 years. Israel's medical technology exports have saved more lives per capita than exports from any other country. Israel has saved more Muslim and Arab lives than all of the Arab and Muslim countries combined.

Israel's high technology accomplishments exceed those of all of Europe and most of Asia. Israel has accomplished more for the environment than virtually any country in the world. Israel has taught the world how to fight wars against terrorism ethically and with concern for avoiding civilian casualties.

Israel — no country in the world faced with comparable threats has a better record of human rights than Israel does. And if you don't believe it, listen as you will to Richard Kemp when he describes how Israel compares to the other armies of the world facing threats from terrorists who hide among civilians.

When Justice Brennan, probably the most liberal justice to serve on the Supreme Court went to Israel he said, "If terrorism ever comes to the United States there is only one country from which the United States can learn how to balance human rights against the need to fight terrorism, and that country was Israel." Israel should be so proud and appreciative of Israel, but instead, Israel is the only country in the world today whose legitimacy continues to be questioned, constantly questioned; constantly challenged.

It's more than ironic since no country has ever been established on a firmer foundation of law. Israel was established, after all through declarations accepted by the League of Nations, by the United Nations, by international law, yet its legitimacy remains challenged. Compare it to other countries that started with the revolutions or simply grabbing a land of other people, Israel paid for every inch of its land, paid for it by money and paid for it by the blood of its children.

This process of delegitimation began in earnest in 1975 when the United Nations took so much time and so much energy debating whether Zionism was racism. And do you know what else was happening in 1975 at the time the United Nations was involved in this ridiculous, bigoted debate? A million people were being murdered by genocides in Cambodia and the United Nations paid no attention to that at all. They were too busy to delegitimize and condemn Israel. And then it moved from 1975 to the Durban Conference in 2001 where the Durban strategy of delegitimation took root. What they did is they turned everything around. They accused Israel of racism, Israel of apartheid, Israel of genocide, Israel of creating a holocaust.

What it did is they inverted the entire concept of human rights and turned it against Israel. There were efforts of the result of Durban to boycott Israeli institutions, institutions of learning, institutions that are trying to cure cancer and heart disease and Parkinson's and yet efforts are made, to this day, in Norway as we speak, in England as we speak to boycott Israeli academic institutions.

You know what happened last time when they tried to boycott Israel and England? A few of us got together and put together a petition saying, "You know, if you boycott Israel, your universities, we will not speak at your universities." And we circulated a petition. We thought we'd get 400 or 500 signatures — 11,000 American academics, Nobel Prize winners, presidents of universities — signed onto that petition.

And the message was clear, "If you try to boycott Israel it is you who will be boycotted and it is your universities that will suffer." Israel's universities are among the greatest in the world today and nobody should try to boycott its great academics and its great places of science.

And then came the concept that we call "guerilla lawfare," efforts to try to delegitimize Israel by using legal tactics, legal means, using international law, using the law of humanitarian aspects, using all of it to try to turn it against Israel, divestment campaigns, distortion of human rights. When it came to Durban II, the attempt to redo it again last year we were ready and we went to Geneva and we fought back. And we won Durban II. They invited Ahmadinejad. We invited Elie Wiesel.

We said, "Who is the person who speaks for human rights here today?" One of the proudest moments of my life was when I was arrested by the Swiss police for daring to try to confront Ahmadinejad and just ask him a simple question, "Do you deny the Holocaust? Have you ever been to Auschwitz? Which books have you read about the Holocaust?" Challenging him to debate his Holocaust denial. He denies the Holocaust while trying to bring another one upon the Jewish people of Israel and yet I was arrested for trying to confront him in a peaceful way. But at Durban the students stood up against Ahmadinejad and he was booed and people walked out on him and we won the second Durban encounter. And the important message is, "We fight back. We don't take these kinds of abuses sitting down."

And when Richard Goldstone, through his everlasting disgrace, agreed to serve on a commission that was so one-sided, we fought back, "One-sided?" Do you know who the three people serving on the commission were? One of them, a colonel from Ireland, who before he ever served on the commission believed that Israeli soldiers had taken out Irish soldiers and killed them in cold blood and he was going to get revenge. He believed Israel had no right of self-defense. He was serving on the commission. A British woman, who before she heard a piece of evidence said Israel was guilty of war crime. She was serving on the commission.

And a Muslim woman from Pakistan said, "You have to believe Palestinians, they always tell the truth." She was serving on the commission. And then, of course to give the commission the certification of Kashrut, the Heksher, they put Richard Goldstone on the commission to sign on as the token court Jew so that when people argued with the contents of the Goldstone Report or tried to debate him, as I tried to debate him, his answer was, "No. I'm a Jew. My daughter lives in Israel. I must be correct. You can't question me, because I'm a Jew."

An argument ad hominem which had nothing to do with the demerits of the Goldstone Report, which got everything backwards. And we now have videotaped evidence showing everything that Goldstone said was wrong. Israel tried desperately to avoid civilian casualties while Hamas fired from behind civilian shields. The point is that delegitimation efforts, until now, have been limited primarily to the United Nations and European countries. It has never ever succeeded in the United States.

Why? Because in the United States, thanks to AIPAC and thanks to the fact that we have tremendous support among Congress people and among the people of the United States, Israel is known to be America's great friend and Israel gets high ratings every time their public opinion polls and that's why every effort to delegitimize in the United States up to now has failed. But I want to tell you about a new effort that's just beginning and that has the potential to succeed if we don't fight back. The newest threat, the newest attempt, to import delegitimation into the United States comes from people, like Walt and Mearsheimer, who write a book which gets it all backwards.

Walt and Mearsheimer obviously says a lot of good things in some ways about AIPAC. He thinks you're the most powerful organization in the world, you control what the United States does. What he fails to understand is that the reason AIPAC is strong — and may you go from strength to strength and increase your strength — is because Americans support Israel and because Americans support Israel, Congresspeople support Israel.

There is a lobby in Washington that has no public support, which is very powerful that Walt and Mearsheimer could've written about. It's called the Saudi lobby — no public support, great influence and power. That's a paradox. It's no paradox in a democracy that a lobby for a group that's completely popular and supported by the American public should have some influence in Washington. And then comes Jimmy Carter in an attempt to delegitimize Israel by using that word, apartheid. Jimmy Carter, a man who wouldn't use the word genocide to describe what was

going on in Darfur, because he says, "You have to be careful about how you use language," uses the word apartheid to describe Israel's only democracy.

But now the most recent argument and the most serious argument ever made against Israel in modern times is one that's recently been all over the Internet, namely that Israeli actions endanger American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. It's all over the Internet and it's creeping into the mainstream media.

Headlines, "Israel: a danger to U.S. troops." — CNN, Rick Sanchez. "'This is starting to get dangerous for us,' Biden purportedly told Netanyahu, 'What you're doing here undermines the security of our troops.'" — Yedioth Ahronoth.

United States tells Israel, "You are undermining America, endangering troops." "Israel is empowering al-Qaeda, Petraeus warns." "Petraeus: Israel's intransigence could cost American lives." Variations of this false and dangerous argument have now been picked up by Joe Klein in Time Magazine, Roger Cohen in the New York Times, Walt and Mearsheimer, Brzezinski and others. Both Vice President Biden and General Petraeus have apparently disavowed this argument, though their statements continued to be cited in support of its conclusion.

Whatever the source, the argument has taken on, unfortunately, a life of its own and is being used in an effort to bring the delegitimacy campaign to the United States of America. It is the most dangerous argument ever put forward in the ongoing campaign against Israel, because its goal is directly to reduce support for Israel among mainstream Americans, who like every one of us in this room support our American troops fighting abroad.

It is an ironic and insidious argument, primarily because the pillar of Israel's policy with regard to the United States troops is that Israel never wants to endanger our troops. That's why it never asks the United States soldiers to fight for Israel as many of allies, in fact, do by seeking the scapegoat Israel for the deaths of American troops at the hands of Islamic terrorists. This argument has become a powerful weapon in the campaign to demonize and delegitimize Israel in the minds of mainstream Americans. Most of all, it is an entirely false argument factually, entirely false. There is absolutely no relationship between Israel's actions and the safety of American troops, none. Consider the year 2000-2001, what was Israel doing in 2000-2001 in — in November, December, January?

They were offering peace to the Palestinians at Camp David and Taba. They were offering the Palestinians estate on 100 percent of the Gaza, 97 percent of the West Bank, a divided Jerusalem, \$35 billion reparation package. What was going on during those months? Osama Bin Laden was planning the destruction of the World Trade Center.

No relationship between Israeli actions and hatred and actions by Islamic extremists against the United States. In 2005, Israel leaves Gaza, leaves Gaza — unilaterally leaves Gaza. That's exactly what everybody has been asking for and at the same time there was a slight increase against American troops in Iraq. During Operation Cast Lead and the Jerusalem building recently announcement there's been no significant escalation of violence against American troops in Iraq.

There is no relationship. It's made up out of whole cloth. I challenge those who are offering this argument, put up or shut up. Prove your point or stop making these bigoted arguments. They are wrong. And think — think of the implications — think of the implications of this argument. The implications of this argument are the delegitimation of Israel in the minds of Americans. Why? Because for Muslim extremists it's not what America does. It's not what Israel does. It's what Israel is. It's what America is.

Islamic extremists cannot accept the concept of a secular democracy, a democracy that grants equal rights to women, equal rights to all. It's what they are that they hate, not what we do. That's why it's an important part of the delegitimation campaign, Israel cannot do anything that would satisfy the Islamic extremists to threaten the United States troops. There's nothing Israel could do. If Israel made peace tomorrow unilaterally giving up all of its rights it would have no impact whatsoever. As long as Israel exists that is the grievance of Islamic extremists and Israel is not going to stop existing to satisfy Islamic extremists.

Nor can the United States — nor can the United States do anything to stop Islamic extremists from threatening Americans unless it were to pull out all of its troops in the Middle East, which it's not going to do. The point is there's nothing that Israel or the United States can do to stop these Islamic extremists. There is something, however, the Palestinian Authority can do, by stopping the daily incitements against the United States from extremists. Just go on MEMRI.org. Just watch it on a daily basis on PA television, that's the incitement that puts American troops in danger, by stopping teaching its children to hate us, by stopping the naming of public squares in the West Bank after murderers of Americans and the murderers of Israeli children and civilians.

This square is being named after a murderer who killed an American woman and who killed many Israelis. When you do that and you say that you're naming the square in order to encourage your children to follow in the path of that murderer, you're inciting violence against American troops and against American citizens. So let us focus on those who hate America and those who incite terrorism against our troops rather than on a brave nation that loves America, that helps it militarily and with intelligence and that never asks the United States for troops to protect it. I want to mention just two propositions that I ask anybody who makes the case against Israel to dispute, two simple propositions.

Number one, if Israel's enemies were to lay down their arms, stop terrorism and stop firing rockets there would be peace. Does anybody dispute that? Number two, if Israel were to lay down its arms there would be genocide. That is the reality. That's the truth and those two statements must be kept in mind.

And then I want to talk just very briefly about three lessons of the Holocaust that I know I've learned in my friendship with Elie Wiesel. The first lesson is that morality without military power is not enough. We had morality on our side during the Second World War, but we didn't have the ability to defend the Jewish community. Thank God for Israel. Thank God for its military. Thank God for the ability that we now have to defend our morality. The second lesson — the second lesson is that military power without morality is dangerous. That's why the Israeli military learns lessons and ethics. That's why it has the concept of holiness of arms. That's why it has professors helping to shape ethical policies for the military. And the third one, and perhaps the most important one that Israel and all of us must keep in mind when dealing with Iran is that you must always believe the threats of your enemies more than the promises of your friends.

And that's why Israel must be totally self-reliant. And so — and so in closing, I want to thank you for showing support for this great embattled nation. I want to tell you that the United States-Israel alliance is good for America. It's good for Israel, it's good for democracy, it's good for human rights, it's good for peace; it's good for the world. And may the relationship between these two great democracies continue to go from strength to strength. Thank you very much.