

Press Release

12th Herzliya Conference

Israeli President Peres to 2012 Herzliya Conference: "We must stop the heads of the present Iranian regime from walking freely in government houses and in the lounges of the United Nations"

The Middle East's leading security & policy gathering continues through Feb 2nd at the IDC Herzliya Campus

In the keynote address at the inaugural session of the annual Herzliya Conference, Shimon Peres, president of the state of Israel implied that the world should reconsider its ties with Tehran. "No option should be ruled out in dealing with the Iranian danger. It is an existential danger... It is the duty of the international community to prevent the combination of evil and the atom."

The president called Iran "the most morally corrupt government in the world" saying, "The current leadership of Iran executes people because of their opinions. It finances and trains terrorists who will sow the seeds of terror and murder across the world." He added, "The main problem of the world is Iran."

In continuing to discuss the Iranian situation, Peres noted "Iran is trying to equip itself with weapons of mass destruction to scare many and to achieve its imperialistic ambitions which take on a religious guise... Nuclear weapons must not be allowed in the regime of the ayatollahs in Iran."

Peres was clear, "At the end of the day there is no future for the present Iranian leadership. It only offers destruction for the future. It threatens civil rights and peace between countries."

Turning to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Peres expressed his confidence in the Palestinian leadership as reliable partners for peace, "I believe that President Abu Mazen and Prime Minister Fayyad are worthy partners for peace and do not want the conflict to continue. I know from the conversations I've had with them. That is their primary hope. The relationship between us is in a state of flux." He added, "There is a national consensus between us and between them that allows us to achieve peace based on the solution of two countries for two peoples – a Jewish country, Israel, and an Arab country, Palestine."

Speaking decisively, Peres expressed his support for continues negotiations with Fatah, "Any delay of negotiations could reinforce Hamas... At this moment a possibility is developing that seems impossible to comprehend. Hamas, a terror organization that is against peace and against negotiations will get a lot of international money while Fatah, the organization that believes in dialogue will lose its funding. Today Hamas is promised donations of close to a billion dollars a year without being required to stop terrorism or to prevent the Gaza Strip from becoming a forward base for the terrorism of Tehran." He concluded, "There's not a lot of time left".

Jordan's Prince El Hassan bin Talal At 12th annual Herzliya Conference: "The enemy (between Israelis and Palestinians) is defined as permanent"

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The theme for this year's Herzliya conference is "Israel and the Middle East". Jordanian Prince El Hassan bin Talal tried to change the mindset of the listeners by referring to this theme as "Israel in the Middle". Hassan then began his satellite televised speech by clarifying that "this conference isn't about us, it's about the millions of people in our region who hope for a better future in these difficult times".

"I want to tell you honestly what I feel about this conference" said Hassan "If its sole purpose is the subject of security it cannot bring us closer to peace". Hassan went on to explain that security falls into three categories; weapons of mass destruction, acts of violence and human dignity. He added to this that "The path of arms control has been paved with good intentions and nothing else". He takes this claim a step further by saying that "in terms of our priorities, our emphasis on security is security for us and no security for others".

Hassan reiterated that the region needs a vision, a concept. He continued by saying that unfortunately "the situation today is that conditions do not exist between Israelis and Palestinians... and the enemy is defined as permanent". "When so many Israelis say that peace with the Arabs is not possible then the Arabs come to the conclusion that even if possible is not desirable". Hassan added that "Many Israelis who have wanted to live with Palestinians...may be considered fools and Palestinians who want to live with Israelis are cursed as traitors". "Is it not time if our color is black or white or brown that we start looking at our joint future?" Hassan asked earnestly.

Hassan claims that a mutual understanding must take place in order to begin the process of peace. "There is a people living alongside you who have also experienced a loss of life and despair" Hassan says about the Palestinians "Security with weapons cannot bring real safety, only justice can". Hassan concluded with the statement that "these conversations aren't going to lead us anywhere unless we find the will to progress together" and that during this difficult period "It is indeed a time to restore our faith, our joint faith".

Minister for Strategic Affairs Moshe Ya'alon at the 2012 Herzliya Conference: Iran developing 10 000 kilometer nuclear capability

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In the keynote address of the session: "The Ticking Clock: Dissuading and Containing Iran's Strategic Ambitions" on the final day of the 2012 Herzliya Conference, MK Lt. Gen. (res.) Moshe Ya'alon, Israeli vice prime minister and minister for strategic affairs criticized the West saying there are erroneous "conceptual links made by western like-minded people but also leaders in the west" regarding the connection between Israel and the rest of the Middle East. The greatest link is the claim that the Arab Spring is a result of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

He went further to say that "When a western person asks himself why do the Muslims attack us?" They cannot fathom that it could be possible that they want to get Islam to become a world religion and so, they blame the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This "creates the wrong paradigm about what happens around here." He added that it was difficult for people to understand that there's another culture with jihadist principles that sanctifies death. "I would say that to a great extent this is ignorance coupled with naivety."

Ya'alon stressed that the absolutely clear position – by Israel - is that these events [the Arab Spring, terrorism etc.] "are not a result of the existence of Israel or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict... If you don't understand this, you can make a mistake with regard to the Iranian situation too."

Another problem prominent in the way the West views the Middle East regards "This patronizing attitude where you think you know what's better for another country." Ya'alon added that the West had come to Israel with the "a new patronizing idea" of "democratization." He noted "We would love to see democracies around us but if you think democracy can be applied by elections, you are making a mistake." He criticized the fact that "we have gotten used to the idea that every problem has a solution... we are so patronizing and feel so powerful that we feel that we can solve everything... Mankind arrived on the moon so why can't we solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?" Ya'alon explained, regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, that sometimes we need to realize that "there are some things that we can't solve, it has to be managed." He added that we live in a world of instant gratification and in the same way that we are used to instant food, we believe that we can have instant peace: "Food now, peace now, democracy now."

Moving on to discuss Iran specifically, Ya'alon said that Israel has no border or territorial conflict with that country and that "when Iran says it wants to wipe Israel off the map, it's not based on conflict between Judea and Samaria." He added that Israel had never declared war on or with Iran and that the two countries had, in fact, had excellent relations until the present regime. When it comes to the idea of Iran against Israel, Ya'alon was firm, "western failure ignores the fact that Israel is seen as the little Satan...The big Satan is America." According to Ya'alon, the real Iranian challenge can be perceived as imaginary but they are challenging western culture and western hegemony. "This regime is being very proactive – doing active things to threaten western hegemony... When we look around its difficult to find a strife in the Middle East where the Iranians are not somehow involved."

Ya'alon stated "This regime [Iran] has already built missile capability" and added that the R&D missile center where the recent explosion took place **was developing a missile with a 10 000 kilometer range. This was aimed at America not us," he said.** "Our claim is that the military problem in Iran needs to be stopped... Such a non-conventional regime should not have such non-conventional capabilities."

Naming four points of interest, Ya'alon explained "We argue and think, and this is the Israeli policy, that we need to stop the Iranian nuclear project." This should include a combination of political isolation, economic sanctions, support for the opposition in Iran and a reliable military option. According to Ya'alon, the success of the sanctions would burden the regime to such an extent that they would be motivated for survival rather than the continuation of their nuclear program. "The clock keeps ticking... We should be talking sooner rather than later... So if anyone here is scared or fears the prospects for the Middle East and the world, they should be determined in the next few months to take steps against the nuclear action in Iran."

Fmr. Greek Prime Minister Papandreou at the Herzliya Conference: "Jittery Global Markets Excluded Us"

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Greece has been squarely in the eye of the financial storm over the past two years and former Prime Minister of Greece, George Papandreou said in the closing address of the first day of the Herzliya Conference that he found himself "at the helm of the ship with no GPS system."

Criticizing other countries within the European Union, Papandreou said that on taking leadership of the country, he fought for Europe to respond to the needs of the Greek financial markets, which they did "with the biggest bail-out program in mankind's history." However, "many in Europe made a wrong diagnosis" regarding Greek's situation. Many believed this was a Greek problem... many believed the Greeks were the problem." According to Papandreou, it was this attitude that led to the situation where "jittery global markets excluded us" when the global markets became more speculative and more aggressive, leading them

to suggest the "simplistic solutions" of "sort out your own house" to Greece. Rather than helping to regulate the Greek financial system, Europe used Greece as the target of financial speculation. "Greece is not a poor country. Greece is not a country without potential. Greece was a poorly mismanaged country," former Prime Minister Papandreou continued. He said that Greece had reduced its debt and deficit remarkably, with a 5% reduction only in 2011, but that this had come at a price for the country's citizens. "It would be much easier for the Greek people to take the pain, first of all if the process was gradual and secondly, if the burden was shared."

Papandreou believed that with relation to the economic problems in the world, "the debt and deficits in the developed world are the tip of the iceberg... Capital is fleeing from the developed world, not only to emerging markets but to tax havens." He added that the lack of transparency and democratic oversight were part of the problem with inequality being one of the main problems of the global economic crisis. "Reorganizing the financial system is of great importance."

He suggested out-of-the-box thinking for dealing with the global crisis. "We are at a crossroads in Europe, where either we go into a deeper integration or disintegration." He believed that the former was the only solution. He stressed the need for the country's of Europe to do two seemingly contradictory things – firstly "strengthen global governance" and secondly, "strengthen our citizens and our communities" to make "our people feel they own this process of change and development... no one politician has the solution." He added that Europe needed to "reinvent our democracy in the context of a globalizing economy" and get back "to the basics of our values... we're looking for mechanistic solutions and machinations and have forgotten the man and the woman in the street."

Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz, IDF Chief of Staff at 12th Herzliya Conference: "Our region is the fastest being armed and we are the target"

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"Our region is the fastest being armed and we are the target" said Lt. General Benny Gantz, Chief of Staff at the 12th annual Herzliya Conference as he described the military situation today in the Middle East. "The threats that were then are still relevant today. In addition to all the traditional threats there are new threats". One of the main examples is the munitions power "every single point in the state of Israel is under threat of missiles" says Lt. Gen. Gantz as he describes the challenges we face and the steps we must take. He then regarded the most important issue as of now which is the Iranian situation. "There is no doubt that Iran is striving for a bomb" Gantz said simply. "If it does so within a year or a bit more it will be able to allocate resources and we will see it happening. Iran is a problem of the whole world, of this region and of Israel". Gantz explained that "It [Iran] wants to establish itself as a strong regime and it will try to use it in order to fortify its position".

"We must not forget one basic thing, the state of Israel is the only state in the world whose extermination is called for. This is not something that can be ignored" Gantz said firmly "I believe that unity and partnership is very important when we seek to contend with threats from without" Gantz explained the situation that "not enough people serve in the army and not enough respect those who do. The IDF represents all the various groups that make up the Israeli society. It is a point of encounter for the secular and religious, for men and women, for Jews and non Jews. We do not fight, we find a way to respect each other".

Regarding the security budget Gantz said "we are at a dangerous situation" and this is "in addition to all the challenges that I have noted and I know that there are others". Gantz explained that "suitable resources must be made available to deal with the challenges of the future and those we foresee developing [but] I don't think it needs to be done with an emergency withdrawal of funds". He concluded by saying "I am aware

of the challenges of the future. We must not get caught up in any kind of strategic delusion... victory will not only be obtained by defensive capabilities but by offensive capabilities”

Fmr. Consul General of Israel Amb. Alon Pinkas at 12th Herzliya Conference: “Israel has lost it’s role as strategic asset (to the US)”

The Middle East's leading security & policy gathering continues through Feb 2nd at the IDC Herzliya Campus Former Consul General of Israel in New York, Amb. Alon Pinkas questioned the Israeli American status quo at the 12th annual Herzliya conference by saying “Israel is not as much a strategic asset as it thinks... but neither is it a burden as the critics say”. In a panel titled “Israel- A strategic asset for the United States?” Participants Daniel Shapiro, Ambassador of the United States to Israel and MK Daniel Ayalon, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, were also part of the panel.

Pinkas elaborated on his point by explaining that “for many years and decades [Israel] has been looking to make itself strategic in this relationship... tried to make itself valuable. Israel has lost its role as a strategic asset but it has strengthened its asset as an ally”. Pinkas then gave an example of a specific relationship between U.S. President Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu that is unlike the former relationships between the countries which were usually warmer towards each other. “They obviously do not harm the alliance but somehow it’s not as smooth as it used to be, the dialogue isn’t as fluent”.

Pinkas also added that “Israel has nothing more important from the security perspective than its relationship with the US. This is the asset we should protect. But because there is asymmetry somebody has to make the adjustments and be more sensible. I’m not sure that Israel is making the right effort to help the US help Israel”.

Countering his point was Amb. Daniel Shapiro who replied that “I took the title of the panel with a little of the curiosity that there should be a question mark after it. For me it’s statement, a fact that does not require a debate”. Not only is Israel an asset, in Amb Shapiro’s opinion, but an ally as well “What makes us allies are the common interests that we have. Clearly we share common goals and common enemies”.

Shapiro felt the need to clarify to the audience that the United States “make these commitments not out of charity, we stand with Israel as a fellow democracy at times threatened by non democratic countries” and that the US will “help insure that Israel remains a strong democratic state”. He also stressed the point that “the relationship [between Israel and the US] has grown... we have strategic cooperation... we invested tens of billions of dollars in Israel, we have the US Israel defense cooperation”.

Amb Shapiro furthered this point by adding that “the president (Obama) said the bond between us is unbreakable”. While he admitted that “our interests are not identical” Shapiro assured the audience that “we have common goals and this shows a healthy and strong relationship”.

When asked how Israel has in fact helped the US, Amb. Shapiro replied with the example of “Iran and terrorist organizations that threaten both of us. I assure you that our understanding... is dramatically enhanced by Israel’s coordination”. He also added that “we’re (Israel and the US) extraordinarily well coordinated. This is what should be happening between two allies... that share a threat”.

MK Ayalon Agreed with Amb. Shapiro and added that during this time “our battle is with radical Islam and here not only are we an asset but we intensified the manner in which the US needs us as a partner”. Furthermore, Ayalon said with pride that “In contrast with the other countries in the world they [Israel] never asked American troops to come and fight instead of them. There are no American troops in Israel, Israel will fight for itself”.

When asked what the future holds for this relationship, Shapiro replied that “I don’t see a threat...I see continuity. At times we have debates between our leaders... but even when we have debates, the foundations of the relationship are never put into question”. Shapiro concluded by saying that “we each

have an interest in each other's success and it's in Israel's interest that the US be seen as a leader... the defining characteristic is that we each further each other's interest". For his conclusion, Pinkas chose to clarify what Israel is to the US as he said that "never has an American president used the term "strategic asset", they may have used "unbreakable alliance" or "unwavering commitment"... and we shouldn't be sorry for that." Because in Pinkas's opinion, not only is Israel not a strategic asset to the US but rather "the US is the strategic asset to Israel".

Former Mossad Chief, Efraim Halevy, at 2012 Herzliya Conference: "Look at Syria as the Achilles Heel of Iran"

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Speaking on the last day of the 2012 Herzliya Conference, during a session entitled "The Ticking Clock: Dissuading and Containing Iran's Strategic Ambitions," Efraim Halevy, former head of the Mossad, identified Syria as being "at the helm" of the current Middle East situation saying "If there is a change in Syria, this will have wide international ramifications... The future of what happens in Damascus will impact all of the Middle East."

Looking to Iran, Halevy said that "The countries of the world and to some extent Israel," make the mistake of seeing "Iran as a problem of Iran and Syria as a problem of Syria" where what the world should be worrying about is Iran's presence in Syria and whether this would continue. "We should have a main interest in ensuring that the Iranian interest is booted out of Syria," he said, adding that the world should "Look at Syria and see it as the Achilles heel of Iran" and as an "enormous opportunity."

Halevy was definitive, "in facing Iran, like facing any other threat, we should look at where there is vulnerability and where can we gain maximum effects... not only regionally but internationally." He criticized those who had been saying that the sanctions against Iran had been ineffective as, he said, if you asked the people on the streets of Iran, they would attest to its effectiveness. In addition, "it caused the Iranians to do what they swore they would never do" and put the nuclear issue on the discourse of the world.

Questioning whether things were moving fast enough with regard to action against Iran, Halevy responded, "they never move fast enough." However, he added "we're not doing all that bad... we need to look at the sunnyside of the situation."

He added that Israel and the world should "avoid self victimization. We're not victims. We should talk like a power, we should act like a power and we should gain results like a power."

Maj. Gen. Aviv Kochavi, director of military intelligence, IDF at 2012 Herzliya Conference: "We are facing a Middle East which will be more hostile"

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Speaking at the opening session of the final day of the 2012 Herzliya Conference, Maj. Gen. Aviv Kochavi, director of military intelligence, Israel Defense Forces said that he saw the new reality in the Middle East as "a sort of storm" adding, "More than ever I think that this turmoil storm has created new contexts within which we have to analyze this reality."

Continuing on this idea, Kochavi went on to describe the six "main moldings" that illustrate the current situation namely: "the rise of the voice of the Arab mass and population;" the rise of Islam; religion, congregation and tribe; a decrease in the power of the radical axis; the economy; and bipolarity.

He explained that for decades the citizens of the Middle East "couldn't explain their aspirations" but that suddenly they had "found their voice" and this was the "essence of the change and revolution... the population has learned that it can bring down the regimes." He went further to say that of the population of 100 million, most young people lived at home until at least the age of 30 because of their economic profile. These same Arab youth were more educated, more connected to the world through the internet and more exposed to the world around them. Because what they're seeing is so different to their own reality, their feelings of frustration increased. "This combination of frustration and corruption" was the "combustion material" that pushes them to act. "The result of all these things is a very clear picture - the central leader has lost his power" and the central power [the people] has become stronger. No longer can the leaders led by way of fear. "The public dares so much more, the regime dares so much less."

The general stressed the point that Islam was not the "motivating factor of the revolution" adding that the youth did not go out into the squares to protest with copies of the Quran in hand. This being said, the religious Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis were taking the revolution and "translating this infrastructure into political power." Kochavi said that on the background of the general "Islamitization process," it was "only natural" that these organizations would take power in these countries owing to the lack of "meaningful leadership" and "clear leadership" that followed the turmoil of the protests. The former, he said, was still lacking.

Looking ahead, he predicted that the "Islamic leadership model" that would be created in Egypt "will probably greatly impact the Middle East." He added that "the national component that characterized Islamic regimes for the past decades" may be seeing a penetration which is religiously based and not national. He added though that at the end of the day, it was the economies within the Middle East countries that would be their "central test."

With regard to "religion, congregation and tribe" Kochavi said that within the national regimes, conflicts and frictions between these three components were reduced, but the moment they lost their power, these frictions came out. Within these he used the example of tension between Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia as "each aspires to regional hegemony."

On the bipolarity front, Kochavi noted that the face of the military conflict had changed. Aside from Israel having enemies with thousands of rockets and missiles with the ability to hit Israel, "entire systems of rockets and missiles have been integrated into an urban environment." He said that in any normal suburban environment, every second home housed and protected a missile. This, he called, a "great change" and said that it compelled the intelligence to change. "Intelligence needs to give more intelligence to different areas."

Within the current Middle East situation, Kochavi stressed the two main areas of Iran and Syria. Iran, he said, continues to advance its capabilities, the basis of which is to achieve nuclear power. He said that the country was driven by three things: "regional hegemony;" "deterrence;" "to become a regional and world player." Kochavi shared that some information that Israel has proves that Iran continues to deal with and

build nuclear arms. "We believe it will take Iran a year to complete its goals." He said that all the current pressure on Iran was not deterring it from continuing on its path but that overtime, that would be the result. With regard to Syria, Kochavi called it "the vortex of this Iranian turmoil" and added that "events are closing in on Damascus" but that the Assad regime would carry on until its inevitable end.

Mr. Salman Shaikh, Director of the Brookings Doha Center at 12th annual Herzliya Conference: "we are in effect in a phase of Islamic democratization"

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"The original political and social contract has fallen apart. We are looking at a more radical situation" said Mr. Salman Shaikh, Director of the Brookings Doha Center at the 12th annual Herzliya Conference, joined by Mr. Riad al Khouri, Senior Jordanian Economist. "We are in effect in a phase of Islamic democratization" Mr. Shaikh stated as he discussed the implications of an Arab spring. "Whether or not it will succeed depends on their patience, respect for woman and minorities, as they will be judged on this".

Mr. Shaikh elaborated on the topic and clarified that "in regards to the change and transformation in this region we all know it's going to take a generation if not more. The criteria we should set is whether they are actually able to establish viable and robust democratic systems". He explained that "the birth of Arab politics is what is going on around us. I'm afraid that that is what's going to continue for some time". Shaikh then advised that although "it's tempting to seek refuge and do nothing... [Israel should] embrace their [Arab] struggle and the paradigm of change".

"The Arab spring may not be as warm and as pleasant as people imagine" Mr. al Khouri added "but the Islamic winter may not be that cold after all". Al Khouri continued to say that "I'm not worried, as a non Muslim, about the Islamic winter and I don't think there will be a big problem with the emergence of Islamic regimes". As for Lebanon "I'm not worried in the least except for this rather silly mercenary situation." Al Khouri concluded that "there are mistakes' being made every day by all sides, not just by the regime and the government but the process is a healthy one".

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak at 12th Annual Herzliya Conference on Iran: "Those who say later may find later is too late"

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"Every move has a high and sometime irreversible price" said keynote speaker Israeli Defense Minister, Ehud Barak, at the 12th annual Herzliya conference, but "those who say later may find that later is too late" he added discussing Iran. Minister Barak stressed that we are not alone as he said that "the world today has no doubts of the danger of a nuclear Iran to the Middle East and the economic, defense and security of the entire world. It is crucial to stop Iran from becoming nuclear" Barak stated firmly. At troubled times such as these we need "a strong leadership that can make decisions and carry them out. If we formulate such a leadership and stand united behind it, we can take on any challenge"

Earlier in a panel entitled "In the Eye of the Storm", Maj. General (res.) Danny Rothschild, Chairman of the Herzliya Conference, Maj. General (res.) Ilan Biran, Former Director General of the Ministry of Defense and Lt. General. (res.) Danny Haloutz, Former Chief of the IDF General Staff discussed national security.

Rothschild began by explaining the different components of our security being “Israel’s international standing in the world, this year being a very problematic year as both the US and Europe were concerned with their own problems”. The second component was “the ability of the situation to change” as last year proved “that the situation around can change far faster than our ability to respond”. Rothschild stated that in these times “I’m certain that part of the answers that in the past we had to mobilize maximum military force for we can do now by clicking “Enter”.”

Biran took a stronger approach claiming “the collaboration between deterrence, society, and economy is crucial”. “There are no choices” said Biran firmly “you have to attack while you defend”. He then offered what he thought was the best solution to the situation “Efficient deterrence is the answer. That will stop war”. Former Chief of Staff Haloutz concluded by saying that “if we need to take steps and if it is imposed upon us, we should use as much force as possible in order to deter and show we have an iron fist”.

All of the proceedings are broadcast live with a VOD option on the Conference's website:
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The Herzliya Conference is the flagship of the Institute of Policy and Strategy (IPS) at the Lauder School of Government of IDC Herzliya. The Herzliya Conference addresses Israel’s national agenda by encouraging public debate and influencing the country’s public policy planning. This is achieved through convening Israeli and international elite policy makers, conducting cutting edge research, fostering a global network of contacts in a public forum by attracting the best and the brightest to take part in the conference and its discussions.

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