

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد
بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم
از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

Al Jazeera

Israel Shoes Aimes at Biden

By Marwan Bishara

3/12/2010

Poor Joe Biden. He's come to deliver the good news: The US is back in the Israeli fold and will continue to have boots on the ground in the Middle East. And what does he get in return? A shoe in the face.



The Israeli interior ministry's announcement of 1,600 new housing units (apparently part of 50,000 units in the long term) in East Jerusalem settlements, hurled at the vice president during his visit to Israel, provoked a political storm and outright condemnation, leading to a clumsy apology from the prime minister.

Unlike Iraq, Israel is anything but occupied by America, but its leaders have been terribly preoccupied by the Obama administration.

The US president's appearance of neutrality at the outset of his first year, as expressed in his Cairo and Ankara speeches, and his administration's pressure on Israel to freeze the illegal settlements, have for all practical purpose, ruined his chances with the Israeli Right.

No wonder, Obama's popularity in Israel is one of the lowest in the world. And his standing is even worse among the supporters of its right-wing coalition.

Tribal politics

Leading Netanyahu's cabinet, Eli Yishai, the interior minister, and Avigdor Lieberman, the foreign minister, are also the country's leading populist extremists. They have been in the habit of uttering the most inflaming statements, at times bordering on racism.

Unlike traditional establishment politicians like Ehud Barak, Israel's highest decorated soldier with 35 years in service, or Tzipi Livni, the opposition leader and former foreign minister, who comes from the intelligence services, the New Right leaders use extremist rhetoric to make up for their short Zionist resume.

Yishai's religious Sephardic (oriental) based Shas party, and Lieberman's secular Russian-based Yisrael Beiteinu, are engaged in a zero sum political battle with Netanyahu's Likud party over right-wing voters in Israel.

Since the 1980s, Shas has consistently radicalised its rhetoric to attract young Sephardic Jews.

It was this community's tilt to the right that paved the way for the Likud party to win in the elections for the first time in 1977.

The same applies to Yisraeli Beiteinu's rise in the 1990s. It has tried to cater to the over one million Russian immigrants in an attempt to keep them away from the traditional Ashkenazi Labor party or the populist Likud.

These two large and more recent Israeli immigrant communities, the Sephardic (1950s) and Russian Jews (1990s), have found their way to the dominant secular Ashkenazi collective by stressing their brand of extreme Zionism above all else.

Their extremism is testimony to their Israeliness as well as to their Zionism.

The predominantly secular Russian immigrants embraced radical Zionism as a way to avoid tackling the thorny issues of religious Judaism, and the Sephardic Jews adopted populist Zionism to bypass the, at times, racist Ashkenazi-dominated establishment.

That's why at times, it does sound like Israel - to quote its ally Henry Kissinger - has no foreign policy, only domestic politics.

But in the words of Yossi Sarid, a savvy Israeli commentator and former opposition leader, what seems like chaos in Israel, in fact works like clockwork.

Keep your love

That's why what appeared like a political blunder of bad timing, is in fact as expected as it is shocking.

But considering that the US values 'Israel is like no other friend', to cite the vice president, this is truly chutzpah.

Biden can explain all he wants about his Roman Catholic Zionism and Obama's friendship and support for the "Jewish State", but the Israelis are not buying into this whole "tough love" Bul****t!

If the Obama administration hopes that rapprochement with Israel will improve the Democrats' chances to hold onto their majority in Congress, he now understands that Israel has a different electoral agenda of its own.

Meanwhile, the Israel Rightist leaders continue to gain from the US military support and presence in the region, just as they benefit from growing hostility towards Barack Hussein Obama, which they nurture.

When it comes to the Obama administration, Israelis are voting with their shoes. Go figure!