

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر 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

زبانهای اروپایی

BY L. MICHAEL HAGER

24.07.2024

Honoring Netanyahu; Dishonoring America

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is due to address a joint session of Congress on July 24. Speaker of the House Mike Johnson took the lead in extending the invitation last March. With the participation of Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, it soon became a bipartisan invitation. This won't be the first time an Israeli leader has used an address to Congress to strengthen Israel's already powerful relations with America. In 2015 Netanyahu bypassed the White House to deliver an address that attacked U.S participation in the Iran nuclear deal negotiations. Although the Prime Minister's visit deeply embarrassed then President Obama, a year later he overlooked the slight to commit \$38 billion in arms aid to Israel over ten-years.

As distasteful as the planned Netanyahu visit may be to some in the Democratic party, it is hardly surprising. Pro-Israel lobby organizations have donated significant sums to members of Congress in their most recent elections. AIPAC reportedly committed \$100 million to defeat those progressive House Democrats who called for a ceasefire and opposed the transfer of U.S. weapons to Israel. Not even the highly visible genocide in Gaza and settler attacks on Palestinian communities in the West Bank have diminished U.S. enthusiasm for Israel in the executive and legislative branches. Pro-Israel members of Congress have even condemned the recent protests on university campuses as "antisemitism." Despite the rising toll of dead and injured Gazans and International Court of Justice (ICJ) warnings against "genocidal acts," the Israel narrative that blames Hamas for Palestinian casualties and accuses pro-Palestinians of antisemitism has taken root in America.

It is not an overstatement to say that U.S. policy in the Middle East is mostly if not entirely dominated by Israel; that the White House and Congress have combined to provide bombs

and missiles that fuel the IDF's war on Palestinians in Gaza; and that so long as unlimited PAC funds are available to politicians, nothing is likely to change in America's cozy relationship with Israel. As a result, we can expect much applause and many standing ovations when Netanyahu speaks to Congress next Wednesday. The expected boycott by a small number of members is unlikely to lessen Congress' love affair with Israel.

We know that the loudest supporters of Israel receive the most money from the Israel lobby and that the lobby's donations to members of Congress (MOCs) have increased since October. We know that candidates for House or Senate seats face a Hobson's choice: accept the lobby's money or see it go to their opponents. No wonder that senators and congressmen of both parties mindlessly follow President Joe Biden's lead in giving the IDF all the lethal weapons it wants for its ongoing war on Gaza. When the International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor requested arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, some MOCs called for sanctions against the prosecutor. Meanwhile, the U.S. vetoed repeated resolutions that called for a ceasefire in Gaza. When Biden recently announced a three-phase plan to end the war and return the hostages held by Hamas, he secured a UN Security Council resolution to that effect. Yet Netanyahu has continued to insist that Israel's onslaught on Gaza will not end until all of his war goals are met. The U.S. now appears tethered to Israel, while its Prime Minister is yoked to the fascist members of his war cabinet. Who or what can break these Gordian knots?

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued a preliminary decision in January stating that "all measures" must be taken to prevent acts of genocide. We can expect that the Court will ultimately rule that Israel's many war crimes, including the use of starvation as a war tactic, do indeed constitute genocide under the Genocide Convention of 1948. In disregarding and denigrating both the ICJ and the ICC, the U.S. undercuts both institutions and the international rule of law.

The upcoming Netanyahu address to Congress should be viewed as an inflection point in U.S.-Israel relations. As Biden's future as the Democratic nominee for the presidency hangs in the balance, now is the time for prospective candidates to call for a reset of America's relations with Israel. More immediately, the failure to achieve a ceasefire in Gaza risks a major war with Hezbollah in Lebanon that would likely draw in U.S. troops.

What is to be gained by joining hands with an extremist regime that commits genocide in Gaza and ethnic cleansing in the West Bank? This moment is a time for policymakers to consider more broadly the pros and cons of the U.S. security state, with its hundreds of military bases around the world.

The coming visit of Netanyahu should prompt a serious assessment of U.S. relations with Israel. It should also cause citizens to question the financing of U.S. elections by lobbyists, corporations and billionaires, who corrupt democracy with their money.

L. Michael Hager is cofounder and former Director General, International Development Law Organization, Rome.

JULY 23, 2024