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**Obama meets Netanyahu:
What Needs to be said
African World**

By Bill Fletcher, Jr.

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Dear President Obama:

I know that you did not ask my opinion, but in light of your meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu I wanted to humbly offer a few thoughts and suggestions.

No US Presidential administration since President Eisenhower has taken a really tough stand towards Israel and its violations of international law and precedent. You may remember that after the Israelis joined with the British and French in 1956 in invading Egypt, the US took a firm position and insisted that all three aggressors withdraw from Egypt. Interestingly enough, all three did.

Nevertheless, since that time, almost irrespective of Israeli violations of human rights, international law, and common decency, US administration after administration has found any way to excuse the Israelis and put the burden on the Palestinians.

Mr. President, the Palestinians have lived under an occupation for more than 40 years. International law says that a people who are under occupation have a right to resist the occupation. International law does not recognize occupations that violate United Nations resolutions. Perhaps, after some study, you could explain how is it that discussions of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories almost always focus on what the Palestinians are doing rather than questioning why the Israelis are still there, and why they keep building settlements.

Prime Minister Netanyahu clearly recognizes that you are not George Bush, but in traveling to Washington, DC his objective was to secure your silence, if not support, for minimal action on the part of the Israeli government to address the needs and demands of the Palestinian people. What many of us want to know, Mr. President, is whether you will be more like Eisenhower, or whether the Palestinians will be allowed to

be blamed yet again for their own occupation.

I don't want to push this too far, Mr. President, but when Prime Minister Netanyahu asked you to join forces with him to threaten Iran, why didn't you ask him when was the last time that Iran invaded and occupied someone else's territory? When Prime Minister Netanyahu asked you about the alleged nuclear threat from Iran, perhaps you could have fleshed out your answer to the question regarding nuclear threats in the Middle East that you were asked by Helen Thomas in one of your first press conferences after the November election, when you failed to mention - perhaps it was an oversight - that the only nuclear power in the Middle East/Western Asia is Israel?

Needless to say, my hope is that you would have chosen to be more like President Eisenhower with regard to Israel, and informed Prime Minister Netanyahu that if Israel does not pull out of the Occupied Territories within a given amount of time, the US will cut off aid. But then you might be concerned that some of your domestic supporters might accuse you of being a bad ally to Israel. So, how about, just to get things started, you suggest:

- That Netanyahu needs to get down to real negotiations with the leaders of the Palestinian people - including but not limited to Hamas--towards a final and just resolution of the conflict.
- That Netanyahu needs to deep-six his ideas about building the Palestinian economy while ignoring Palestinian national self-determination.
- That Netanyahu needs to address the peace proposal that the Arab League floated for years which would bring about peace and security for Israel and the Palestinians.
- Oh, and of course, that immediately Israel must end the blockade of Gaza, repair the damage they caused through their aggression, and cease and desist from any further selective assassinations of Palestinian leaders.

Mr. President, there is so much more to cover, but I think that the bottom line is that the people of the world are looking at you and wondering whether you are truly interested in shifting US foreign policy or whether you are more concerned about US image. There are those around you who believe that the problems that the USA faces overseas are largely the result of George Bush and bad public relations, rather than recognizing that the USA has a history of being on the wrong side, particularly when it comes to issues facing people in the global South.

There are many of us who supported your candidacy who believe that the true test of the democratic and just aspirations of your administration will be judged by whether the US remains complicit in the oppression of the Palestinian people. We are counting on you, sir, to do the right thing.

Sincerely,

Bill Fletcher, Jr.

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BlackCommentator.com Executive Editor, Bill Fletcher, Jr., is a Senior Scholar with the [Institute for Policy Studies](#), the immediate past president of [TransAfrica Forum](#) and


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