

Mark My Words

Credible Words Are Those That Are Backed By Action

On Sunday, October 19, 2008, Senator Joe Biden, now US Vice President-Elect Biden, declared at a presidential campaign fund-raiser in Seattle, Washington:

And here's the point I want to make. Mark my words. Mark my words. It will not be six months before the world tests Barack Obama like they did John Kennedy.... Watch, we're gonna have an international crisis, a generated crisis, to test the mettle of this guy.... I can give you at least four or five scenarios from where it might originate. And he's gonna need help. And the kind of help he's gonna need is, he's gonna need you, not financially to help him, we're gonna need you to use your influence, your influence within the community, to stand with him.¹

With the exception of the Israeli government and those who follow and/or support the ongoing occupation of Palestine in the Middle East, how many in the Seattle audience understood from these words that President-Elect Obama's first international test would come from the State of Israel -- a supposed US ally?

Indeed, the timing of Israel's most recent incursion into Gaza is both noteworthy and prescient. Not only has it preserved the peace of the Jewish and Christian holy days, but it has placed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict near the top of everyone's list of things to remember for 2008. Moreover, it demonstrates the Israeli government's dissatisfaction with the Bush Administration's attempt to bring peace to the Middle East and seeks to embarrass the incoming President by forcing him to choose between his middle name

1 Lynn Sweet, Chicago Sun Times, 21 October 2008. <http://blogs.suntimes.com/sweet/2008/10/joe_biden_seattle_fund_raiser.html>

and US friendship with Israel.² Finally, it offers the President and his transition team little time to embrace the Middle East conflict on their own terms before taking office on January 20, 2009.

To my dismay both Senators Barack Hussein Obama and Joseph Robinette Biden, Jr. strongly supported the state of Israel during the 2008 Presidential election, and I was compelled, as are we all in a well-functioning political democracy, to compromise issues that were very dear to my heart. Fortunately, however, the election is now behind us, my candidates have won, and it is time for me to help steer our new, in-coming administration in a direction that is both fitting and proper. This is doubly necessary insofar as the Bush Administration's recent pronouncement strongly suggests that the current administration intends to do nothing.³

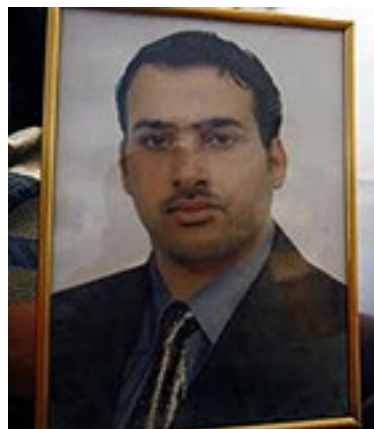
In order to bring perspective to the ongoing political crisis in the Middle East and the United State's important role in bringing an end to this crisis please consider, by way of example, the shoes of Muntazer al-Zaidi recently thrown at President Bush. They posed only a minor threat to the security and safety of our Presi-

2 The Islamic New Year 1430 began on December 29, 2008 with the month of MuHaram. It is during this month that the Islamic world celebrates the massacre of the family of Islam's third Imam, Hussain ibn Ali and his prophesied martyrdom. See Hussain, *The Third Imam, in the Story of the Holy Ka'aba and Its People* by S.M.R. Shabbar [online document] <<http://www.al-islam.org/kaa-ba14/6.htm>>

3 Not only does the White House perceive the Israelis as the victims in this affair, but it mocks the entire affair as of low-grade diplomatic importance -- a Deputy Press Secretary, speaking from a Middle School in Crawford Texas. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/12/print/20081229-1.html>>

dent, but brought an important measure of emotional relief to millions of Arab and non-Arab supporters of social justice the world over. In stark contrast, the bombs recently cast into the densely populated Gaza Strip have already been responsible for an enormous loss of human life and property that has resulted in world-wide condemnation.⁴

Now compare the likely fate of Muntazer



al Zaidi, a once respected Iraqi journalist and genuine hero among many of his compatriots with the likely fate of the Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, the leader of Israel's most recent offensive into the

Palestinian territories:⁵ Muntazer al Zaidi will be tried, surely convicted, and likely sentenced for common assault against a visiting head of state; Ehud Barak will, if contemporary history is our guide, escape with a mere slap on his hand by the world community and receive much praise and support from the Israeli public.⁶ Mind you, al Zaidi's shoes harmed no one, but himself.⁷ Ehud Barak, on the other hand,

4 Safa Joudeh. "The longest night of my life." *Electronic Intifada*, 28 December 2008. <<http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article10065.shtml>>

5 Kevin Flower and Elise Labott, "Hundreds dead, injured in Gaza as Israeli airstrikes continue". *CNN.com/World*. <<http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/meast/12/27/gaza.israel.strikes/index.html>>

6 United Nations. Department of Public Information, News and Media Division, New York. "Security Council Press Statement on Situation in Gaza", 28 December 2008. <<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2008/sc9559.doc.htm>>

7 Afif Sarhan. *The Observer*. "Bagdad Clog-

is a veritable threat to US security.⁸

In 2002 the Council of the League of Arab States adopted a comprehensive peace initiative calling for the State of Israel to withdraw fully . . .

from all the Arab territories occupied since June 1967, in implementation of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, reaffirmed by the Madrid Conference of 1991 and the land for peace principle, and Israel's acceptance of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in return for the establishment of normal relations in the context of a comprehensive peace with Israel⁹.

It is in this spirit that I would like to see the new Obama-Biden Administration enter office and do what all US administrations have failed to do before it; compel Israel to respect the rights and privileges of its neighbors, embrace our



ger' suffered brutal beating after arrest". *Sunday*, 21 December 2008. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/dec/21/iraqi-journalist-shoe>>

8 R. A. Stegemann. "Unaccomplished fait accompli". *Viewpoint*. 11 September 2002. <<http://homepage.mac.com/moogoonghwa/earth/viewpoint/barak.pdf>>. This article contains an article written by Ehud Barak on the first anniversary of the tragic 911 attack on the United States by Osama bin Laden. Ehud Barak's article was found on the New York Times website and then removed several hours later for reasons unknown..

9 BBC News Channel, Arab Peace Plan of 2002. Arab League Summit, Beirut, Lebanon. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1844214.stm>

Arab brethren as peoples different from ourselves, but with the same rights and privileges as Israelis to the land that both Jews and Arabs so woefully occupy.

The United States government has many levers within its political arsenal to effectuate this end -- levers that it has heretofore failed to utilize effectively. For example, it could cease the further sale and delivery of the military weapons used by Israelis to kill and maim innocent Palestinians; it could stop the loans that keep the largely corrupt, democratically elected Israeli government from remaining in office; it could encourage a boycott of Israeli trade and stifle Israeli economic growth in the same manner that the Israelis have stifled the economic growth of their Palestinian neighbors. Important is that the people of Israel take responsibility for their government's acts, utilize their democratic freedoms, and apply pressure on their government to end the Israeli occupation of



of the Palestinian territories and bring a final and equitable peace to the region.

I applaud the Obama-Biden camp for wanting to achieve energy independence, but energy independence is not the solution to Middle East peace; nor is it likely to achieve very much with regard to the removal of the terrorist threat, be it from rogue Arab extremists such as Osama bin Laden, or the state-sanctioned terror of Israeli war planes, tanks, bulldozers, and blockades.

Show us, President-Elect Obama and Vice President-Elect Biden, that you have the political mettle to do America's part in bringing peace to the Middle East, for it is only the United States that has the power to compel the Israeli hand.

You have promised change. The time to set this change into action is on January 20, 2009.

The world will be listening carefully to your every word and watching you closely in the days, weeks, and months that follow. Please do not disappoint us and show that we have put the fate of our nation, the Middle East, and the world into good hands.

Let us end together the cankerous stalemate that has plagued good relations between the Islam world and the United States of America.