

## Remarks by Attorney General Martha Coakley

On the Occasion of Israel's Independence Day, Tuesday, April 28, 2009

Consul General Tamir, Deputy Consul General Yedidia, members of the diplomatic corps, and fellow admirers of the State of Israel: it is an honor for me to join you in celebrating the anniversary of the founding of Israel, that brave and thriving democracy which has inspired the world for 61 years, and which inspires it today.

My own trip, ten years ago, was an emotional and historical learning experience which has enhanced and informed my perspective since.

John Kennedy observed that what once was said about Athens is true as well of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, that “[w]e do not imitate—for we are a model to others.” And in this respect, as in so many respects, we here in Massachusetts have much in common with the State of Israel, and with its remarkable people.

Israel is a genuine model from which many around the world have much to learn:

1. In its commitment to diversity and pluralism and tolerance and human rights, all while obliged to live in a neighborhood that is challenging, to say the least. It is not Mr. Roger's neighborhood, and Israel cannot forget that for a second.
2. In its firm footing upon progressive values, including its long-standing embrace of the rights of women, and in its protection of gays and lesbians, of religious minorities, of workers.
3. In its independent judiciary, which has led the free world in searching out ways to balance individual liberties with the need to protect citizens from acts of terror. Every element of the design of the Supreme Court conveys the ideas and principles behind justice, and the need for balance of those ideas.
4. In its press, which is open and free and vigorous in its critiquing and its criticism of government actions.

Make no mistake about it: at the root of the special friendship, the kinship between the people of Massachusetts and the people of Israel is the simple fact that we share the same values. We always have, and we always will.

Just as Massachusetts and Israel are bound together by our shared values, we are partners in the effort to improve our citizens' lives, and to achieve breakthroughs in the areas that pose the greatest challenges and opportunities to us, and which will pose the greatest challenges and opportunities for our children.

In medicine, in energy, in clean-technology, in bio-technology—in area after area, Israeli and Massachusetts companies, research institutes, universities, entrepreneurs, non-profits, scientists and ordinary people are cooperating and collaborating every day, bringing to their common efforts their common creativity and can-do spirit, in order to bring about a more promising future.

That partnership between Massachusetts and Israel, which has been strong for so long, which is so strong today, grows stronger every year.

We in Massachusetts are mindful of the fact that, Israel is America's true friend. When American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were bombed by al-Queda, Israeli medical personnel and emergency technicians were among the first to arrive on the scene in order to save American lives.

When Hurricane Katrina devastated the people of Louisiana and Mississippi, it was Israel that immediately flew tons of supplies in to help Americans in their time of need. And when we here in Boston were the victims of terrorism at Logan Airport on 9/11, it was Israel, whose expertise in preventing terror is borne of painful experience, whose experts arrived to help us take steps to ensure that what occurred here on 9/11 would never happen again.

And so, our relationship with Israel is a very simple one: We are true friends.

Israel's extraordinary social, cultural, political, economic and humanitarian vibrancy has been achieved despite a seemingly endless series of obstacles.

Only one of those obstacles is that, unlike some of its neighbors, it does not have the benefit of many natural resources.

Some of you may recall Golda Meir's famous lament that it was just the luck of the Jewish people that Moses had to lead them to the one tiny sliver of the Middle East that did not have any oil.

Nevertheless, just as Israel has been a triumph of democracy, it has been an engine of innovation and economic productivity. Let me give you a few examples of how necessity and hard work has been the mother of success in Israel.

1. Israel has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest concentration of high tech start-ups in the world, second only to Silicon Valley.
2. It has more companies on NASDAQ than any country other than the United States.
3. It has the highest number of patents per capita in the world, and the second highest output of new books.
4. In 2006, despite a summer in which one-quarter of its population was forced to take cover while Hezbollah fired 4000 rockets at Israeli civilian centers, Israel was ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in the world out of 125 economies by the World Economic Forum.

The world is better off for the stents that save people from heart disease, the vaccines protecting young women from cervical cancer, the organic solutions for cleaning up oil spills, and the hundreds of other advancements that are all products of Israel, and which are among Israel's gifts to the world.

But for all of Israel's triumphs, and all that it does to serve as a model for the world, its people continue to be deprived of what they want most of all, and what they have wanted for so long: to be permitted to live in peace with its neighbors.

From my own trip to Israel I could not only see, but feel, the longing for peace and normalcy that permeates Israeli society at every level.

Here, once again, I am reminded of something that Golda Meir said over 50 years ago: that peace will come to the Middle East when Israel's enemies love their children more than they hate Israel.

We all know that these are not easy times for Israel; indeed they are times that challenge us all. But I am here to reaffirm that just as Israel is our friend, the people of Massachusetts are Israel's friends, tonight and tomorrow.

My congratulations on this splendid occasion of the 61<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Israel's independence. I look forward to joining you at many more such celebrations in the years to come.