



Max M. Kampelman Papers

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FAX**Date** 03/11/97**Number of pages including cover sheet** 1Ambassador Max
Kampelman**Attention****Phone****Fax Phone** 639-7004**CC:****FROM:** Barry Jacobs *po*
Assistant Director for
International Affairs
The American Jewish
Committee
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Suite 1201
Washington, DC 20005**Phone** (202) 785-4200**Fax Phone** (202) 785-4115**REMARKS:** ☐ Urgent ☐ For your review ☐ Reply ASAP ☐ Please Comment

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

Azam Azam, an Israeli Druze who was working in Egypt in a textile factory was arrested by the Egyptians in November on charges of spying. He has been held in Egyptian jails since then. The Israelis are raising his situation as a "humanitarian" issue. Prime Minister Netanyahu raised this with President Mubarak when they met last week. Mubarak said it is now a matter for the Egyptian legal system. Foreign Minister Levy said in the Knesset on February 19 that "there is nothing to the accusation he is a spy."

We ask that his case be given prompt consideration. Moreover, as Mr. Azam was in Egypt as part of the still underdeveloped economic and commercial relationship, his arrest sends a particularly unfortunate message at a time when we should be looking for ways to build trust.

By J



The American Jewish
Committee

OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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Meeting with
His Excellency President Hosni Mubarak

Wednesday, March 12, 1997
11:15 a.m.

Blair House

ATTENDEES

Ambassador Max Kampelman
Chair

Dr. Rhoda Baruch
Mr. Phil Baum, AJCongress
Mr. Arthur Berger
Mr. Paul Berger
Mr. Hyman Bookbinder
Mr. David Carliner
Mr. Norman Gelman
Dr. Larry Goldmuntz
Mr. Malcolm Hoenlein, Conf. of Presidents
Mr. Jess Hordes, Anti-Defamation League
Mr. Jason Isaacson
Mr. Barry Jacobs

Mr. Ken Jacobson, Anti-Defamation League
Mr. David Kahn, AJCongress
Ambassador Phillip Kaiser
Mr. Jonathan Kessler
Mr. Howard Kohr, AIPAC
Mr. Simon Lazarus
Mr. Leon Levy, Conf. of Presidents
Mr. Daniel Mariaschin, B'nai B'rith
Mr. Norman Ornstein
Mr. William Schneider
Dr. Stephen J. Trachtenberg
Mr. Benjamin Wattenberg
Dr. Dov Zakheim



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February 27, 1997

Ambassador Max Kampelman
Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson
1001 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Max:

Thank you again for agreeing to chair our meeting with President Mubarak on Wednesday, March 12, at 11:15 a.m., at Blair House.

As you prepare for that discussion, I thought you'd find the enclosed material useful -- in particular, my colleague Yossi Alpher's latest background paper on Egyptian-Israeli relations and the notes from our National Advisory Council lunch last month with the Egyptian Ambassador. Also, Ambassador Maher has just sent me, and I'm sending along to you, the enclosed interview with Osama el-Baz in the *Egyptian Gazette*.

When we get closer to the date of our meeting, I'd welcome the chance to chat with you about particular approaches that might be taken in guiding the conversation. I should be in town until then, and available at your convenience.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

Jason F. Isaacson
Director

1- HUMANITARIAN
2- EGYPT BI-LATERAL
EXPANDING AUSTIN
IMPROVING ARAB +
3- AMF- ISRAEL (ABJ)
4- NEW BILATERAL
5- VISIT TO ISRAEL

AD TO EGYPT - 2.1.8

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Robert S. Rifkind
President

David A. Harris
Executive Director

January 31, 1997

His Excellency Ahmed Maher El Sayed
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt
3521 International Court, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

Dear Ambassador Maher:

Thank you for addressing the National Advisory Council of the American Jewish Committee at our meeting this week in Washington. We appreciated the time you took from your busy schedule and were impressed, as always, by the thoughtful attention you gave our concerns.

The chilly character of the Egyptian-Israeli relationship is a profound disappointment for many of us, as was evident from the discussion at Tuesday's meeting. We trust that our remarks were received in the spirit of candor and respect that has been the hallmark of our exchanges with you and other senior officials of the Egyptian Government.

As active supporters of regional peace and stability, we once again look to Cairo for leadership in establishing a new tone in Arab-Israeli relations. At this critical time, in the aftermath of the agreement on Hebron, and in anticipation of the forthcoming meeting of President Mubarak and Prime Minister Netanyahu, we look forward to the creation of a newly constructive climate and to a series of tangible and enduring steps toward Arab-Israeli reconciliation.

In friendship and respect, my colleagues and I also look forward to the opportunity to work with you again to convene a meeting of American Jewish leaders with President Mubarak during his visit to Washington in March. I know that you and Jason Isaacson have discussed this matter on several occasions. Please be assured that the resources of our organization will be fully at your disposal in repeating the success of last summer's meeting with the President.

With best wishes.

Very truly yours,

Robert S. Rifkind

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Discussion Memorandum

Date: February 3, 1997
To: Memo for the Files
From: Barry Jacobs
Subject: National Advisory Council Meeting with the Ambassador
of Egypt, Tuesday, January 28, 1997

On Tuesday, January 28, Egypt's ambassador to the United States, Ahmed Maher El Sayed, met with members of the National Advisory Council at the AJC's Washington office. The subject was concern with the behavior of the government of Egypt, particularly since the election of Benjamin Netanyahu. The session was chaired by AJC President Robert S. Rifkind with Executive Director David Harris also present.

Ambassador El Sayed began by noting that, just as AJC was concerned about the Middle East, so was Egypt. Both "share a common desire to see the Middle East pacified." He said there are two ways to look at the current situation: The unhelpful way was to focus on the nitty gritty of who said --or did not say -- what. The better way was to look at the progress that had been made, adding "We have come a long way since '77."

He summarized the progress as follows: The Arab nations had sworn never to recognize Israel while Israel had pledged never to acknowledge the Palestinians as a distinct people. Prime Minister Begin had believed that peace with Egypt would be a substitute for having to deal with the rest of the Arab world. Moreover, it had taken years for the Arab world to understand Egypt's role.

After the assassination of Sadat, Mubarak reconciled with other Arab states, and the Gulf War opened everyone's eyes to dangers in the Middle East outside of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Saddam Hussein used the Arab-Israeli standoff as an excuse to justify his invasion of Kuwait. In Madrid and the months following, the rush of events was such that it was not clear what each side wanted to achieve. The Palestinians were not even officially present but were part of the Jordanian delegation. During the discussions in Washington, the PLO could not participate but everyone knew that the Palestinians received their instructions from Arafat.

Oslo was the real breakthrough. Oslo I and II required cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians on security issues. In all of this, Egypt played an important role that has been recognized. Israel finally comprehended that a Palestinian state was inevitable, and the PLO understood that Israeli security concerns would have to be

addressed. Both sides came to recognize that the exchange was one of land for peace which was the only basis for a realistic peace.

Netanyahu's election was a real shock to the Arab world. The new Prime Minister seemed to combine a denial of what had been achieved with a desire to renegotiate Oslo. For several months, it seemed obvious Netanyahu had no plans to pursue peace and that any positive step was taken only under duress. There was the long delay before he met with Arafat, and even then he had to be pushed. The first meeting was not good; it was somewhat better when they met later in Washington. Now there is the Hebron agreement in which he seems to have crossed some sort of psychological threshold. "Land for peace" is no longer anathema.

This change for the better has already been put to the test. Noam Friedman's shooting in Hebron didn't derail the peace process, and this was Egypt's first proof that Netanyahu would abide by the terms of the Oslo accords. This was followed by the recent agreement between Labor and Likud on a joint negotiating position. At last, there seems to be some consensus among Israelis on reaching an agreement with the Palestinians and the word "state" is no longer taboo. There have been other signs of progress, such as the Cairo economic conference that Egypt hosted. Nevertheless, many problems remain: The economic situation in the Palestinian Authority is terrible and there is still terrorism on both sides. But what has happened on the ground in Hebron is more important.

He said Egypt has a stake in the peace process although "We don't believe the US is 100% neutral." "We seek a wider circle of peace" he continued, and it is important Arafat stay in power. Therefore, Arafat can't accept everything that is proposed. Moreover, the Palestinian Authority is not well-established. He stressed that "Egypt has been helpful."

The following questions and issues were raised by members of the National Advisory Council:

- **The Egyptian press in referring to Israel all too frequently resembles the Nazi press in its language. This limits our ability and desire to support Egypt. What can the government do?**

Ambassador El Sayed replied the Egyptian press can't compare with the Nazi press of the 1930s. Many articles indeed have condemned Prime Minister Netanyahu and the government. There is a feeling of antagonism to the current Israeli government, but these (intemperate) articles are a minority. There is freedom of the press and the government does not want to impose censorship.

- **Responsible people in the Egyptian government must speak out; the press is not only anti-Israel but anti-Jewish.**

El Sayed responded there is no anti-Semitism in Egypt. Egyptians sometimes use "Jew" and "Israeli" interchangeably, but there is no anti-Jewish feeling and the attacks are on Netanyahu as a government official and not as a Jew. "I will convey your desire to see more denunciations of these attacks."

- **Almost 20 years after Camp David there is still only a cold peace between Egypt and Israel, the result of Egyptian intransigence.**

Why hasn't the peace been warmer? the ambassador asked rhetorically. Because there was an initial misunderstanding. Israel believed that it could make peace with individual Arab countries and ignored the ties between Egypt and the rest of the Arab world. Egypt could not be close to Israel while Israel would not deal with the PLO. Israelis believed that each agreement should stand by itself. There was tension, therefore, between the two conceptions of peace.

- **The image is that Egypt has not been helpful to the peace process, and in Washington "image" takes on the attributes of fact. When AJC met with President Mubarak he said he needed progress on Hebron. However, during the negotiations, it seemed that President Mubarak was holding Arafat back.**

The ambassador said he took note of AJC's concerns and realizes there is a sense in Washington that Egypt's role had not been helpful. He disagreed and said Cairo had indeed played an active role. It was an Egyptian proposal that King Hussein took to the negotiations, and the idea that Egypt had discouraged Arafat from reaching an agreement was wrong. Moreover, he said Egypt listens to your arguments that the Netanyahu government is democratically elected. Just because it is democratic it does not follow that we have to agree with it or accept its positions.

- **The Hebron agreement calls for reciprocity. There was a promise made at Oslo to change the PLO charter; the Egyptian government could tell Arafat it is time to honor this promise.**

Ambassador El Sayed said the PLO has already abrogated all of the anti-Israel clauses, but people are now asking for a completely new charter. Arafat can no more be forced to write a new charter than Israel can be made to finally adopt a written constitution.

- **There is a need to hear from, and have the perception that, war is not an option for Egypt in any dispute relating to Israel. We have not heard the government of Egypt exclude this. What are the prospects for renewing regional arms control negotiations?**

War is not an option. What President Mubarak said was that, if Israel attacked Syria, Egypt could not remain neutral. On arms control, Egypt wants multilateral talks and does not want any class of weapons excluded, including nuclear. There can be no subject that can be excluded as a condition for talks; we want to discuss all weapons but Israel refuses.

- **How do you see the stability of the government in the face of the challenge by fundamentalists?**

On the stability of Egypt, we face problems that are not so different from those of the United States or Israel. The difference is that our religious fundamentalists use force. We believe that we have the situation under control. We have a stable government but face tremendous economic problems.

- **We had hoped 20 years ago for a greater exchange between the two countries. The government of Egypt has actually discouraged Egyptians from visiting Israel.**

On the question of visits to Israel, there are only a small number of Egyptians who can afford to travel, and they prefer to go to Europe.

- **We need you to convey AJC's unease over Egyptian policy. The commitment of the US government to Egypt is not as solid as it once was. Israel now has better relations with Jordan and even with the Palestine Authority, as well as other Arab states including several in the Gulf, than it does with Egypt.**



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The American Jewish Committee

Meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak Blair House, Washington March 12, 1997

On Wednesday, March 12, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak met for over an hour with a group of Jewish leaders at Blair House in a session arranged by AJC. The delegation, led by Ambassador Max Kampelman, chair of AJC's National Advisory Council, included representatives of the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith, AIPAC, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, and Americans for Peace Now, among others. (AJC President Robert Rifkind and Executive Director David Harris were in Israel at the time of this meeting.) The discussion focused on Egyptian support for the peace process, anti-Israel invective in the Egyptian media, and the Jewish leaders' strong urging that President Mubarak visit Israel now. Participants appeared dissatisfied with President Mubarak's answers and his constant blaming of Israel and its Prime Minister for the current Arab-Israeli tension.

AJC staff present were: Director of Government and International Affairs Jason Isaacson, Director of Public Relations and Communications Arthur Berger, and Assistant Director for International Affairs Barry Jacobs.

Opening the discussion, President Mubarak proclaimed Egypt's support for the peace process. He recognized its fragility and said it could "explode" at any time. Egypt wants a fair and just solution. Regional support is essential, and Egypt is doing its part to move the process along in the right direction.

Ambassador Kampelman welcomed President Mubarak, appreciated the time he was giving to this discussion, and, on behalf of the group, reiterated the respect the Jewish community has for Egypt and its path-breaking peace with Israel. Ambassador Kampelman recalled a meeting he had with President Sadat in the same room in Blair House, after the Camp David Accords had been signed but before the peace treaty had been completed. Eighteen years ago, President Sadat said he wanted to transform the spirit of war and hate into a spirit of love.

Unfortunately, Ambassador Kampelman said, we are now seeing disturbing signs of hate in Egypt, especially in articles, editorials and cartoons that vilify the Israeli leadership and Jews. President Mubarak said he had never seen these (published

anti-Jewish) cartoons before this trip to the U.S. and he heard about it in the press and in a meeting with Members of Congress. Evidently well-prepared, President Mubarak then presented Ambassador Kampelman with a(n Egyptian government-published) book of cartoons from the Jerusalem Post that he characterized as anti-Arab. The Egyptian leader also repeated several times that the press in Egypt is free and even the so-called government newspapers criticize his administration. Pressed by Ambassador Kampelman to condemn publicly this kind of hate speech, President Mubarak said he had already done so a few times.

Max Kampelman and several others appealed to President Mubarak to show the kind of courageous leadership shown by President Sadat who went to Jerusalem in 1977 when there was no peace process. Mubarak said he supported Sadat's decision to go to Israel when it was not popular. Now is not the right time for a trip to Israel. "We believe the present calls for the equivalent of Sadat's step: A trip to Jerusalem by Egypt's leader to support those seeking peace and stop the corrosion in the peace process."

Paul Berger added that everyone recognized how important Egypt is to the peace process. Before Sadat went to Jerusalem there had not been any hope for peace. "What can we do now to build hope. The Israeli public overwhelmingly supported the redeployment agreement on Hebron. But Israelis don't find the atmosphere to be changed because of that important decision. They don't see a reaching out from Egypt; they have been disappointed."

The Egyptian leader placed the blame for current Arab-Israeli tensions on Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. He denied there was an atmosphere of hate now in Egypt but noted that the peace process has its ups and downs and this influences the support it receives from the Egyptian people. He said if he thought a visit would help he would make one but something always comes up and added it is very complicated now. With Netanyahu creating problems by building "new settlements in Jerusalem" and the disappointment over the first phase of the withdrawal. He said he was preparing to visit Beersheba just before Prime Minister Rabin was killed. "I will go when the time is right but don't push me on this visit business," Mubarak stated.

The Egyptian president stressed the difference he sees between Begin and Netanyahu. Begin was an experienced leader who was flexible and understood the regions' dynamics. "I respected Mr. Begin who was strong and decisive, and I supported Sadat's decision to go to Jerusalem. On the other hand, Netanyahu refuses to do anything to help us. He doesn't listen to advise. When Rabin and Peres were prime minister, they worked hard to bring peace and I worked closely with them. When there was a problem we would telephone each other." Mubarak said he had told Netanyahu to keep the tone on Jerusalem low, to keep it out of the news, keep discussions on Jerusalem discreet and concentrate on implementing the Oslo agreements.

He said he warned Netanyahu how sensitive Jerusalem is to Christians and Muslims as well as Jews. He said he wanted Arafat and Israel to implement the rest of the peace

process and then at the end they'd manage to work out a solution on Jerusalem, adding the Palestinians don't want to "divide" the city.

He said that King Hussein also has problems with Israeli policy and he is feeling pressure from his own people and that's why he sent the letter to Netanyahu.

President Mubarak denied accusations that Egypt had pressed some Arab leaders to slow down their normalization with Israel and the Palestinians to drag out negotiations on the Hebron agreement, adding had he wanted to do so, he could have delayed the process from the beginning. The contrary was true, Mubarak said. For example, he said he defended Israel's participation in the Cairo bookfair, but this story never gets into the media. He had personally ordered the removal of any obstacles to Israeli participation. He had his government issue multiple entry visas to the participants, and had given "the greenlight" to cooperation with the Israelis. Egypt was also responsible for encouraging the links between Israel and Oman, Tunisia, and (some very quiet meetings with) Saudi Arabia, and that he had arranged the meeting between Peres and the Omani foreign Minister.

Asked to speak out on ArabSat Television on the need for the Arab World to move its relationship forward with Israel, Mubarak said he had a press conference when Netanyahu was in Egypt the previous week and he has been interviewed on Israeli television 3 times in the past 3 months and kept inviting Israeli journalists to meet with him.

When asked whether the multilateral negotiations on issues such as arms control could not be stimulated, he said Egypt is not slowing these talks down. "We can't persuade Arafat to go to Moscow for a meeting when there are so many problems with the basic negotiations."

Concern was expressed by the delegation about Syria and recent reports that perhaps Assad was moving towards war with Israel. The President said he could assure us that Syria would never go to war with Israel. "Egypt is doing the maximum to bring peace to the Middle East."

Leon Levy said he had just returned from Israel where he met with the family of Azam Azam, and that his arrest sends exactly the wrong message. "We do not want to appear to interfere in the Egyptian legal system, but ask that his case be decided quickly on humanitarian grounds."

Mubarak said he can't interfere in the legal process. He said that it was not well known that Egyptian authorities had apprehended two other Israelis on similar charges earlier and quietly turned them over to the Israeli government. They were going to do the same thing with Azam Azam, but just before the Cairo economic conference, Israel TV broke the story. At that point, it was out of his hands. He said that for 10 years, Egypt has been holding an Israeli drug trafficker who has been condemned to death, but

Mubarak said he has refused to sign the execution order. Israel should not have gone public over the Azam Azam case. Now, he can't do anything until the trial takes place on April 24th.

Commenting on Egyptian-Israeli commercial relations, Mubarak said there are joint ventures with Israel. "I personally approved the deal for a jointly-owned refinery in Alexandria."

When asked about the economy and whether progress in the peace process would bring benefits to the Egyptian economy, he said indeed it would be good for the economy. "We have a big textile joint venture with Israel. I am pushing our people to cooperate. Our economy is moving. Our population growth is down to 2%, and our economic growth is up to 5%."

"I approved and encouraged the dialogue in Copenhagen" he said referring to a recent meeting in the Danish capital between Israeli and Egyptian (and other Arab) artists and intellectuals. "But you must understand, we have groups, unions such as the lawyers union, that do not want to deal with Israelis."

When asked about the need to encourage cultural pluralism and democracy he replied with some spirit, clearly sensitive to American criticism: "Don't talk to me of the State Department Human Rights report. Our human rights are better than yours in America. When we found police violating human rights we put them on trial. There are no political prisoners in Egypt. What we have in jail are criminals. Why do you worry about the human rights of criminals and not of their victims?" President Mubarak exclaimed loudly.

Concluding the meeting, Ambassador Kampelman emphasized the appreciation we all felt for President Mubarak sharing his views with us frankly and in friendship.

Drafted by: BJacobs/ABerger