U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley Statement to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee Conference

March 27, 2017
AIPAC Policy Conference

http://www.policyconference.org/article/transcripts/2017/haley.asp

Dan Senor: It's no secret that there are few places in the world where Israel is more constantly and unfairly attacked than at the United Nations. The woman we are about to hear from is determined to change that.

In January, she gave up her position as governor of South Carolina to represent the United States at the United Nations, because she knew she could make a difference. And although she's only been at the U.N. for two months, she's already making her mark, speaking out against attacks on Israel and standing in the proud tradition of past ambassadors like Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Jeanne Kirkpatrick.

Less than two weeks ago, Ambassador Haley once again responded to an attack on Israel, demanding that the U.N. retract a report that viciously and outrageously attacked Israel as an apartheid state. And her action had impact. Soon after, the secretary general required retraction of the report.

Following a recent U.N. Security Council meeting on the Middle East, Ambassador Haley came out to the press and articulated some plain truths. Here's what she said, quote, "The discussion today on the Middle East was not about Hezbollah's illegal buildup of rockets; it was not about the money and weapons that Iran provides to terrorists; it was not about how we defeat ISIS; it was not about how we hold Bashar Assad accountable." Ambassador Haley said, and I quote, "Instead, the meeting focused on criticizing Israel, the one true democracy in the Middle East."

And she closed her statement by saying, quote, "I'm here to say, the United States will not turn a blind eye to this anymore." I think you'd all agree that this has been a pretty refreshing change.

So please join me in welcoming the agent of that change, the United States ambassador to the United States [sic], the Honorable Nikki Haley.

Ambassador, I think they're a little lukewarm on -- I'm just not sure what the reception's going to be like.

So let's pick up on where I left off in my introduction, that statement you made following the Security Council meeting on the Middle East. Were you surprised what you saw about the attitudes and discussions on the Middle East at the U.N.? And what could be done to change it?

Nikki Haley: You know, I was confused. It was totally bizarre because in my first month, talking about the Middle East, there's a lot to talk about. And whether you're talking about Hezbollah or ISIS, all the issues in Syria, which is a problem, that's what I expected us to talk about. I didn't expect an Israel-bashing session.

And literally, listening to each member say the same thing over and over again, I knew they said it was bad, but until you hear it and you see it, you just can't comprehend how ridiculous it is.

Dan Senor: So a lot of people here are just getting to know you for the first time. The theme of our conference this year is Many Voices, One Mission, celebrating the diversity of the pro-Israel cause. Can you talk a little bit about how you started to learn about Israel, your affinity for Israel?

Nikki Haley: Well, I am the daughter of Indian parents who reminded my brothers, my sister and me every day how blessed we were to live in this country. And the truth is, I have seen so many similarities between the Israeli culture and the Indian culture. We're very close-knit. We love our families. We have a strong work ethic. We believe in professionalism and philanthropy and giving back. It's very true. So that's all the good things.

We're aggressive. We're stubborn. And we don't back down from a fight. So it's --

Dan Senor: So I want to talk about some policy issues you're dealing with. You recently said that any resolution of the Syrian civil war should not leave Iran in any control of territory, or influence in territory, where it could pose a threat to America's allies, including Israel. So, from your perspective, at the U.N. what is the attitude about the enforcement of the Iran deal and how to hold Iran accountable? Most importantly, how do we hold Iran accountable for the deal and for the threats it's posing?

Nikki Haley: It's concerning. And the reason it's concerning is because when the Iran deal took place, all it did was empower Iran, and it empowered Russia. And it emboldened Iran to feel like they could get away with more. It is -- you can put sanctions on a country. To take sanctions away, it's very hard to go back and put sanctions back on.

So what we have said is we're going to watch them like a hawk. We're going to make sure that every single thing they do is watched, processed, and dealt with. But my concern is, you are seeing a lot of love for the Iran deal in the Security Council. And that's unfortunate. And why that was ever allowed to go through, why that was ever passed, is beyond me. I mean, it's terrible.

Dan Senor: I want to quote from your first remarks -- your first public remarks as ambassador. You said, regarding those countries, those nations, that don't have America's back at the U.N. -- I think everyone was sort of stunned when you said this because you said, quote, "we're taking names." You said, you said, "We're taking names and we will make points to respond to that accordingly."

So specifically, what can the United States do, what can the ambassador for the United States do, to hold countries accountable to, as you said, don't -- to address the fact that many of them don't have America's back at the U.N.?

Nikki Haley: You want to see my list, don't you?

Dan Senor: Yeah. We only have a little bit of time, but, you know.

Nikki Haley: You know, basically what it comes down to is I'm not there to play. And what I wanted to make sure of was that the United States started leading again. And leading isn't saying and doing things when it's comfortable. Leading is saying and doing things when it's not comfortable.

So the goal was have the backs of our allies. Never again do what we saw happen with Resolution 2334 and make anyone question our support.

When Resolution 2334 happened, and the U.S. abstained, the entire country felt a kick in the gut. We had just done something that showed the United States at its weakest point ever. Never do we not have the backs of our friends. We don't have a greater friend than Israel. And to see that happen was not only embarrassing, it was hurtful.

And so what I can tell you is everyone at the United Nations is scared to talk to me about Resolution 2334. And I wanted them to know that, look, that happened, but it will never happen again.

So to answer the question on what can we do at the U.N., we can do a lot. The power of your voice is an amazing thing. So one, changing the culture of the U.N. is very important. And the way you change the culture of the U.N. is United States tells them what we're not going to put up with. We start to change the culture to what we should be talking about. And then we actually act on what we say.

I wear heels. It's not for a fashion statement. It's because if I see something wrong, we're going to kick them every single time. So how are we kicking? We're kicking by, number one, putting everybody on notice, saying that if you have our back -- we're going to have the backs of our friends, but our friends need to have our back too. If you challenge us, be prepared for what you're challenging us for, because we will respond.

The next thing we did was we said, the days of Israel-bashing are over. We have a lot of things to talk about. There are a lot of threats to peace and security. But you're not going to take our number one democratic friend in the Middle East and beat up on them. And I think what you're seeing is they're all backing up a little bit. The Israel-bashing is not as loud. They didn't know exactly what I meant outside of giving the speech, so we showed them.

So when they decided to try and put a Palestinian in one of the highest positions that had ever been given at the U.N., we said no and we had him booted out. That doesn't mean he wasn't a nice man. That doesn't mean he wasn't good to America. What it means is, until the Palestinian Authority comes to the table, until the U.N. responds the way they're supposed to, there are no freebees for the Palestinian Authority anymore.

So then they tested us again. And a ridiculous report, the Falk Report, came out. I don't know who the guy is or what he's about, but he's got serious problems. Goes and compares Israel to an apartheid state. So the first thing we do is we call the secretary general and say, this is absolutely ridiculous. You have to pull it. The secretary general immediately pulled the report. And then the director has now resigned.

Last thing. So for anyone that says you can't get anything done at the U.N., they need to know there's a new sheriff in town.

Dan Senor: Last question. I think this crowd would be thrilled to hear you for hours, but we're going to -- days, weeks, months. You, when you were governor of South Carolina, signed into law the first anti-BDS legislation signed in any state capital, in South Carolina -- any state capital in America. This is an issue that is close to your heart. Now, with your new position, what do you think could be done to continue and escalate the fight against those who want to delegitimize Israel through the BDS movement?

Nikki Haley: I think we have to show how absurd it is. We have to basically show, just in common sense terms, if you want to boycott North Korea, I get it. If you want to have divestments and pull something away from Syria, do it. If you want to talk about other issues that we're dealing with, I can understand that. But Israel?

You know, and I -- number one, I appreciate all the support and kindness and everything that you've given to me. But all I did was tell the truth. And if you want to continue to support me, which I greatly appreciate, understand that by telling the truth and showing the power of your voice and putting action behind it, there's nothing we can't change.

So with the BDS movement that we were able to stop in South Carolina, we're going to continue to take that to the U.N. and make sure that they understand that is not what we need to be focused on.

Dan Senor: Well

Nikki Haley: Unbelievable.

Dan Senor: I think you'd agree, folks --

Nikki Haley: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Dan Senor: I think you'd agree a refreshing voice for America to have at the United Nations. Please join me in thanking the Honorable Nikki Haley.