

to the lobby's tactics and Israel's brutality.

Nothing can justify 9/11. Those guilty deserve maximum punishment, but it makes sense for America to examine motivations promptly and as carefully as possible. Terrorism almost always arises from deeply-felt grievances. If they can be eradicated or eased, terrorist passions are certain to subside.

Today, a year after 9/11, President Bush has made no attempt to redress grievances, or even to identify them. In fact, he has made the scene far worse by supporting Israel's religious war against Palestinians, an alliance that has intensified anti-American anger. He seems oblivious to the fact that nearly two billion people worldwide regard the plight of Palestinians as today's most important foreign-policy challenge. No one in authority will admit a calamitous reality that is skillfully shielded from the American people but clearly recognized by most of the world: America suffered 9/11 and its aftermath and may soon be at war with Iraq, mainly because U.S. policy in the Middle East is made in Israel, not in Washington.

Israel is a scofflaw nation and should be treated as such. Instead of helping Sharon intensify Palestinian misery, our president should suspend all aid until Israel ends its occupation of Arab land Israel seized in 1967. The suspension would force Sharon's compliance or lead to his removal from office, as the Israeli electorate will not tolerate a prime minister who is at odds with the White House.

If Bush needs an additional reason for doing the right thing, he can justify the suspension as a matter of military necessity, an essential step in winning international support for his war on terrorism. He can cite a worthy precedent. When President Abraham Lincoln issued the proclamation that freed only the slaves in states that were then in rebellion, he made the restriction because of "military necessity."

If Bush suspends U.S. aid, he will liberate all Americans from long years of bondage to Israel's misdeeds.

[UPDATE: This commentary applies to the current administration, as well.]

**Paul Findley** played a leading role for twenty-two years as a Republican congressman from Illinois. He was the first congressman to urge normalization of relations with China, and he wrote the Famine Prevention legislation that marshals U.S. universities to challenge world hunger. Findley makes frequent trips to the Middle East, where he has personal acquaintance with most heads of government, and lectures at universities and foreign policy institutes here and abroad.

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IF AMERICANS KNEW

## Reflecting on our Relationship with Israel

*A year after the attacks of September 11th, former 11-term U.S. Congressman **Paul Findley** reflected on the role our relationship with Israel has played in endangering the American people, our interests, and our ideals.*

September 12, 2002 – Nine-eleven would not have occurred if the U.S. government had refused to help Israel humiliate and destroy Palestinian society. Few express this conclusion publicly, but many believe it is the truth. I believe the catastrophe could have been prevented if any U.S. president during the past 35 years had had the courage and wisdom to suspend all U.S. aid until Israel withdrew from the Arab land seized in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

The U.S. lobby for Israel is powerful and intimidating, but any determined president – even President Bush this very day – could prevail and win overwhelming public support for the suspension of aid by laying these facts before the American people:

Israel's present government, like its predecessors, is determined to annex the West Bank – biblical Judea and Samaria – so Israel will become Greater Israel. Ultra-Orthodox Jews, who maintain a powerful role in Israeli politics, believe the



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Jewish Messiah will not come until Greater Israel is a reality. Although a minority in Israel, they are committed, aggressive, and influential. Because of deep religious conviction, they are determined to prevent Palestinians from gaining statehood on any part of the West Bank.

In its violent assaults on Palestinians, Israel uses the pretext of eradicating terrorism, but its forces are actually engaged advancing the territorial expansion just cited. Under the guise of anti-terrorism, Israeli forces treat Palestinians worse than cattle. With due process nowhere to be found, hundreds are detained for long periods and most are tortured. Some are assassinated. Homes, orchards, and business places are destroyed. Entire cities are kept under intermittent curfew, some confinements lasting for weeks. Injured or ill Palestinians needing emergency medical care are routinely held at checkpoints for an hour or more. Many children are undernourished. The West Bank and Gaza have become giant concentration camps. None of this could have occurred without U.S. support. Perhaps Israeli officials believe life will become so unbearable that most Palestinians will eventually leave their ancestral homes.

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#### **How did the American people get into this fix?**

**N**ine-eleven had its principal origin 35 years ago when Israel's U.S. lobby began its unbroken success in stifling debate about the proper U.S. role in the Arab-Israeli conflict and effectively concealed from public awareness the fact that the U.S. government gives massive uncritical support to Israel.

Thanks to the suffocating influence of Israel's U.S. lobby, open discussion of the Arab-Israeli conflict has been non-existent in our government all these years. I have firsthand knowledge, because I was a member of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee in June 1967 when Israeli military forces took control of the Golan Heights, a part of Syria, as well as the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza. I continued as a member for 16

years and to this day maintain a close watch on Congress.

For 35 years, not a word has been expressed in that committee or in either chamber of Congress that deserves to be called debate on Middle East policy. No restrictive or limiting amendments on aid to Israel have been offered for 20 years, and none of the few offered in previous years received more than a handful of votes. On Capitol Hill, criticism of Israel, even in private conversation, is all but forbidden, treated as downright unpatriotic, if not anti-Semitic. The continued absence of free speech was assured when those few who spoke out – Senators Adlai Stevenson and Charles Percy, and Reps. Paul “Pete” McCloskey, Cynthia McKinney, Earl Hilliard, and myself – were defeated at the polls by candidates heavily financed by pro-Israel forces.

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As a result, legislation dealing with the Middle East has been heavily biased in favor of Israel and against Palestinians and other Arabs year after year. Home constituencies, misled by news coverage equally lop-sided in Israel's favor, remain largely unaware that Congress behaves as if it were a subcommittee of the Israeli parliament.

However, the bias is widely noted beyond America, where most news media candidly cover Israel's conquest and generally excoriate America's complicity and complacency. When President Bush welcomed Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, sometimes called the Butcher of Beirut, as “my dear friend” and “a man of peace” after Israeli forces, using U.S.-donated arms, completed their devastation of the West Bank last spring, worldwide anger against American policy reached the boiling point.

The fury should surprise no one who reads foreign newspapers or listens to BBC. In several televised statements long before 9/11, Osama bin Laden, believed by U.S. authorities to have masterminded 9/11, cited U.S. complicity in Israel's destruction of Palestinian society as a principal complaint. Prominent foreigners, in and out of government, express their opposition to U.S. policies with unprecedented frequency and severity, especially since Bush announced his determination to make war against Iraq.

The lobby's intimidation remains pervasive. It seems to reach every government center and even houses of worship and revered institutions of higher learning. It is highly effective in silencing the many U.S. Jews who object