

**YOM HAATZMAUT-COCKTAIL RECEPTION**

Amora Jamison Hotel, Sydney

Date: 19<sup>th</sup> May 2011

The Honourable Barry O'Farrell –  
Premier of New South Wales,

John Robertson –  
Leader of the Opposition,

Yair Miller,  
President of the Jewish Board of Deputies,

Richard Balkin,  
President of the Zionist Council of New South Wales,

State and Local Elected Officials,

Rabbis, Ambassadors, Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Shalom and Good Evening.

Let me welcome Barry O'Farrell, to his first Yom Haatzmaut reception, as the Premier of New South Wales.

Mr Premier, let me congratulate you for your outstanding victory in the last state election. I want you to know how much we appreciate your participation in this event, and for being part of a line of successive leaders, of New South Wales, who have been a friend to the Jewish community and supportive of the State of Israel.

Mr Premier, I need you to know, in the interests of open and honest disclosure, that over the last 4 years, 4 different premiers have stood here beside me at this reception, so I'm beginning to wonder if I may be bad luck, for you guys

... hopefully you and I, will be together next year, on this podium carrying the same titles.

Secondly, I want to welcome John Robertson, the new leader of the Opposition, and to thank him and his party for many years of friendship that continue to be extended to this community and to Israel.

Thirdly, I want to acknowledge the leadership of Yair Miller and Richard Balkin, as they oversee this event for the first time as President of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies and the State Zionist Council of New South Wales, respectively.

Yair and Richard, I thank you for your leadership and for your service to the Jewish people.

Your youth, your energy and your motivation are a source of inspiration and a promise of hope to all of us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to stand here, together with so many friends and supporters; people who have stood by Israel, who have pledged and participated in the great endeavour that is, our re-established country.

Distinguished guests,

2011 may forever be remembered as a defining moment for the Middle East. A new era is upon us.

Arab peoples rage against dictators from Tunisia to Egypt, from Yemen to Syria. They seek dignity, justice, respect, and above all – freedom.

It takes great bravery and conviction of people to oppose autocratic regimes that are willing to use any means to crush their own people's aspirations for a better tomorrow.

For a region emerging from the battlegrounds of revolution, there is hope that the message of freedom and the promise of liberty will conquer decades of oppression. We, who have experienced the democratic way of life, will always stay by and support the sprouting of democracy in our region.

Israel has nothing to fear from the spread of democratic ideals and principles, or from the desire of half a billion people to make their voices heard.

Israel, as the only truly democratic country in the Middle East stands firmly with those seeking to exercise their legitimate and natural right to free expression, free association, and freedom of choice.

A new light of freedom shines on the Middle East, bright enough to change the destiny of many. But, the winds of change, may also blow clouds of unrest over our region, blanketing us in the darkness of uncertainty, chaos and discord.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our independence celebrations this year has taken place amidst extraordinary changes.

Israel is still a young country, empowered with the traits of youth: optimism, confidence and hope.

At the same time, we are an old nation, carrying on our shoulders, a long history of survival and revivals, days of defeat and days of triumph, hours of sadness and hours of joy. Like no other nation on earth.

At 63, Israel has led the world and advanced humanity through innovation and break-through technologies; in the fields of environment and agriculture, science and education - despite being consumed from day one of our independence, by conflict in a bid for our very survival.

At 63, we feel that we have proudly taken our place among the nations.

Where once Israel stood in need of aid, today our doctors and personnel stand ready to assist in crises as they affect others.

From Turkey to New Zealand to Haiti to Japan, Israel makes humanitarian contributions far greater than any nation her size.

At 63, we have the middle-aged wisdom and humility to acknowledge that we have flaws and that we are not immune from making mistakes.

We struggle with internal disagreements over identity.

We face the ever-lasting challenge of integrating waves of immigrants.

And we address exhausting levels of anti-Israel sentiments from across the globe, including from some places in this country.

Yet, society progresses, the economy flourishes and our academics, musicians and artists are rewarded with international accolades (akka-lades) for their outstanding accomplishments.

We still yearn for a genuine peace, a defensible peace, a permanent peace.

Watching events unfold in our region, we recognise that democracy is an ideal bigger than any one decision, and we hope that the popular uprisings will carry a burning desire for peace, together with the fire of revolution.

Distinguished guests,

I cannot leave this podium, without referring to the events in the Council of Marrickville.

A new menace has emerged. Its main objective is to undermine the legitimacy of Israel as a political entity. This approach is also sponsored by elements of the radical Left, who call themselves 'progressive', and 'liberal'.

But, they are merely guided by party politics, and not by noble moral concerns.

Marrickville Council's vendetta against the nation of Israel - the only true democracy in the Middle East, against the people of Israel - the only people in the region where everyone is equal under the law, reveals ignorance, bias, and insincerity.

Marrickville's Council, the righteous amongst the Councils in New South Wales, is silent as Arab regimes spill the blood of pro-democracy protesters.

Marrickville's Council, the symbol of compassion to human beings, does not protest when Saudi Arabia practices gender apartheid against women.

So, Marrickville Council, the crusader of the fight against injustice, my question to you, and to all those who support your motion is -

Where was your statement?

Where was your resolution?

Where have you been?

Where was your sense of righteousness, compassion and justice, when Iran stated explicitly and publically her vision of a world with no Israel?

Is it possible that the glands of justice operate so selectively in the corridors and boardrooms of Marrickville's Council? Or is there something else that activates these glands against Israel? And only against Israel.

Ladies and gentlemen,

1948 gave us back our voice. It re-established our sovereignty, our dignity, and our ability to fight back. So now, when ugly anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish expressions, are exposed, it will not be overlooked. We refuse to let Israel be the Jew among nations.

Distinguished guests,

History has shown that at times and events like these, silence and indifference are not an option. Politics of extreme need to be addressed and contained by principled ideas and strong leaders.

It was encouraging and inspirational to witness Premier Barry O'Farrell, very early in his administration, demanding Marrickville Council to drop the anti-Israeli campaign, or risk being sacked.

I am here to commend and salute the statement and the actions of the Premier.

Mr Premier, I thank you for being a voice of courage, a guardian of principle and a messenger of justice.

If history had more men like Premier Barry O'Farrell, the journey and destiny of the Jewish people would have been very different.

Chag Sameach and Thank you.