

## Netanyahu briefs the international media

January 17, 2016. J-Wire's Michael Kuttner reports.

Arranged by the Israeli Government Press Office, the annual briefing by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu provides an opportunity for members of the foreign press and diplomats to be updated on the Israel Government's latest assessment of current developments.

Usually the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs participate in this briefing session. They did so this year as well except on this occasion both portfolios are held by the Prime Minister himself so he was there in a dual capacity.

The main event was preceded by an impressive array of food (after all what Jewish occasion can be held without an extensive selection of culinary delights?) It was an excellent opportunity to mingle and meet journalists and diplomats from all over the world.

Without wishing to sound too cynical I am sure that the attraction of the bountiful buffets proved to be more popular with many of the media than the subsequent address by the PM.

The formal part of the evening was advertised as being preceded by some entertainment. The featured guest artist was Dana International who is a previous winner of the Euro Song Contest. For some inexplicable reason the sound level was ear-splitting, reminiscent of weddings where the only escape is to put earplugs into one's ears. Dana's final plaintive plea to the media representatives to "go gentle on Israel" without doubt fell on deaf ears.

A very short presentation followed on Israel's cyber security strategy which highlighted this country's leading role in the world in combating this threat.

The main attraction of the evening was of course the address by the Prime Minister who covered a wide range of topics. The main points were:

A continuing campaign of Israel bashing at the UN and UN Human Rights Council to the exclusion of any other real threats in the world.

The Palestinian Arab rejection of all proposals for the establishment of their own State since 1937. Their refusal to acknowledge the right of the Jewish People to their own sovereignty and in fact a continuous campaign to delegitimise that right. Their refusal to engage in meaningful negotiations, preferring instead to rely on the international community to impose impossible demands on Israel.

Despite all these ongoing challenges, the PM emphasised that Israel today has achieved unprecedented successes which not so long ago would hardly have been envisaged. These include world leading developments in hi-tech, especially in security related fields and even in diplomatic relations with countries which hitherto had no relations with us. In explaining the reason why so



*Benjamin Netanyahu addresses the international media.*

*Photo: Amos Ben Gershon/GPO*

many countries (including Arab ones) are looking towards co-operation with Israel, the PM gave a simple answer. It was because of our expertise in fighting terror with advanced technology. Given the rapid rise of Islamic terror throughout the world the priority is to utilise the latest tools which can combat this lethal threat.

Without minimising the threats from Iran the outlook for Israel in every field is positive and exciting.

Given the opportunity to ask questions it was obvious that the foreign media representatives still stuck to the same old worn out tunes. In response to questions on EU relations, Swedish statements, Brazil's refusal to accept the new Israel Ambassador and NGO accountability Mr. Netanyahu responded as follows.

Relations with most individual EU countries were excellent and most of them understood Israel's positions. The EU as a collective body based in Brussels was another matter entirely, much akin to the UN and associated groups. The funding by the EU of illegal Palestinian Arab construction was unacceptable. The Swedish Foreign Minister's demand for an international investigation over the death of terrorists trying to murder Israelis was outrageous and immoral. Had she made the same demand when French forces eliminated terrorists or US police had eliminated terrorists in San Bernardino? She was a classic example of not double standards but triple standards. There would be no other nominee for the position of Israel Ambassador to Brazil. The proposed legislation for NGO's to disclose foreign funding was perfectly legal and no more discriminatory than similar legislation in the USA for example.

The evening ended with a farewell to Mark Regev who will shortly take up his position as Israel's Ambassador to the UK.

Will there be any change in most of the media's unbalanced and unfair reporting on Israel? The short answer is not a chance. It will be business as usual. Just watch your local media in the year ahead.