



April 2007

15th anniversary of Israel-Azerbaijan diplomatic relations

This year Israel and Azerbaijan celebrate 15th anniversary of establishing the diplomatic ties. On 7 April 1992 diplomatic relations between two friendly states were first established. This is an appropriate to analyze current developments of bilateral relations and further perspectives of ties between Israel and Azerbaijan.



Last year, when Israel celebrated 58th anniversary of its independence, Ambassador Arthur Lenk wrote an article entitled "Israel and Azerbaijan: cooperation serves the interests of our countries". This article was published in two local newspapers - in Azerbaijani and in Russian. The article reflects the spheres of Israel-Azerbaijan cooperation and factors that bring our nations closer. Here is the article that appeared last year.



Since its birth, Israel has been both the home of the Jewish people and a vibrant democracy of all its citizens. It is a place founded in the shadow of the Holocaust and the murder of six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators throughout Europe, for Jews to live freely and without the threat of anti-Semitism and persecution. It has also been the only place in the Middle East where all citizens, including Muslims, men and women alike, could freely choose their own leaders, and could freely and peacefully speak out against their government. Israel is certainly not a perfect place, there is no such state. Nevertheless, today is a good time to reflect on its achievements and aspirations and how these can offer significant opportunities for the people of Azerbaijan.

When many people think about Israel, they tend to focus on the peace process and the conflict with the Palestinians. Perhaps this prism of the conflict and its coverage in the international media, its intense attention in many diplomatic circles and the religious centrality of Jerusalem to Jews, Muslims and Christians alike, dominate the image of Israel to many people. However, Israel is also the home to four Nobel Prize laureates in Economics and Chemistry from the last three years. Dozens of internationally renowned hi-tech companies such as Intel, Microsoft and Google have research and development centers in Israel. Israel agricultural innovations such as drip irrigation, modern greenhouses, dairy cows that give over 11,000 liters of milk per year and seeds for over 40 types of tomatoes have revolutionized farming around much of the world.

For Israel and Azerbaijan, both of our societies seek to live, as described by Kurban Said, the author of "Ali and Nino", both in Europe and Asia. We want to keep our traditions and ancient customs while seeking progress and development for our peoples. When some try to speak of a "clash of civilizations" the cooperation and bridges between our states refute that conflict. Azerbaijan hosts an impressive ancient Jewish community who are loyal citizens of their homeland while closely following events in Israel. Minorities are respected here. At the same time, Israel proudly hosts an Azerbaijani Diaspora which fully and actively participate Israeli life. In fact, Baku native Josef Chagall was elected to Israel's parliament in our recent elections, just five weeks ago. Many members of this community continue to cultivate business and cultural relationships in Azerbaijan. Israel's positive relations with states such as Azerbaijan, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey and Kazakhstan show that there are certainly no faith-based reasons to keep us apart.

Ties between the two states, established soon after Azerbaijan's independence, have been growing and widening with pragmatic benefits for both. Academic ties include exchanges of academics and students and the opening of Hebrew and Israel study centers at two universities in Baku. Israeli agro-business companies recently visited Azerbaijan as part of a bilateral trade forum. Collaborations utilizing Israeli technologies and investments in sectors such as



telecommunications, municipal management, television broadcasting and waste management are all being used in Azerbaijan. World famous Azeri pomegranate juices and jams are marketed in Israel. Later this year, the new BTC pipeline will daily bring Azeri oil only a few hundred kilometers north of Israel, creating new markets and potential for collaboration.

At the same time, both Israel and Azerbaijan are small states living in very difficult regions. Israel seeks a future of peace and security with all its neighbors, however must deal with the challenges of a Hamas government in the Palestinian territories that rejects its existence and shockingly still believes that terrorism and violence could offer an alternative to dialogue and coexistence. Iran's leadership

carries out a path of conflict with the international community which endangers our shared region. Similarly, Azerbaijan remains in the shadows of its unresolved conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and finds regional challenges when it seeks to create economic and development opportunities looking towards the west. It continues to wisely stand strong against those that believe that democratization and reform are somehow a danger to Azerbaijan.

There is still some way to go. There is room for continued growth of trade in a wide variety of spheres, of academic and development ties and cooperation in strategic areas. We have a significant shared cultural heritage to further develop. Many friends of Azerbaijan believe that a regular diplomatic presence in Israel would promote many of these interests. Azerbaijan would have additional opportunities to promote investments, diplomatic support and ties with the Azeri community in Israel. I believe strongly that the more we know each other, the more we interact on a regular basis, the more that we find that cooperation in diverse spheres – from energy and telecom via regional development and agribusiness to regional security issues and the war on terror – serves the interests of the citizens of Israel and Azerbaijan.

Did You Know?



- The State of Israel recognized independence of the Azerbaijan Republic on 25 December 1991
- Diplomatic relations between Israel and Azerbaijan were established on 7 April 1992

Web-site of the month:

EMBASSY OF ISRAEL IN BAKU

<http://baku.mfa.gov.il>

Visit the web-site of the Embassy of the State of Israel in Baku. It is presented in both English and Azerbaijani and aimed to offer comprehensive information about the services offered by the Embassy in Baku. The site includes consular information, including forms for visiting Israel. It offers a window into Israel and the latest information about Israel-Azerbaijan events and news. You can also be acquainted with various issues of three newsletters ("İsrail Xəbərləri", "İsrail Biznes Dünyası", "Israel-Azerbaijan Business News") published by the Embassy.

<http://baku.mfa.gov.il>

Azerbaijani Minister of Emergency Situations participated in exercise in Israel



An Azerbaijani delegation headed by Kamaladdin Heydarov, Minister of Emergency Situations, visited Israel on March 20-21 and watched emergency preparedness and crisis management of exercise carried out by the Israeli authorities.

During the trainings a simulation of the bombarding of an Israeli city took place. This caused the destroying of one building in the area. Dead and injured people were treated and dispatched to the hospital. The Israeli representatives heading the training stressed that such trainings are held frequently to ensure preparedness for actual disasters. More than 200 rescuers participated in the trainings, including specialists who assessed radioactive damage level in the area, evacuating the injured people via more than 20 ambulances to the area hospitals. The participation of Azerbaijani delegation in the trainings offered an opportunity to observe and gain information about Israeli emergency defense potential. Minister Heydarov stated that these trainings are not new for Azerbaijan. He added that it is important to take part in such exercises and exchange of experience. According to the minister, he plans that Azerbaijani emergency service specialists would be trained in Israel.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon Plants an Olive Tree in the Nations Grove in Jerusalem



"I hope that this young tree I have planted today will be a symbol of the efforts underway to minimize the ecological damage caused by greenhouse gases."

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon was clearly excited as he used a hoe to fill in the hole in which he had just planted an olive tree in the Nations Grove at the foot of Mount Herzl and Yad VaShem in Jerusalem. "Although this is not my first visit to Israel it is in fact the first time that I have ever planted a tree anywhere," said the UN Secretary General, and added, "I should like to thank KKL-JNF and the Jerusalem Municipality for including the UN in the Nations Grove that has been planted by world leaders. When the tree grows, in a few years' time, I hope to come back

here and see if it's flourishing as healthily as I hope the cooperation between Israel, KKL-JNF and the UN will flourish."

The impressive ceremony at the Nations Grove took place at the conclusion of the Secretary General's visit to Yad VaShem. "It's an honor for me to plant an olive tree, whose branches form part of the UN's symbol, on this site below Yad VaShem. The UN as a whole has enlisted in the battle against hatred and anti-Semitism, and just as the General Assembly unanimously condemned Holocaust denial so, today, we are helping member countries to operate educational programs on the Holocaust. It was a unique occurrence that has to be remembered and must never be allowed to happen again."



Ambassadors for peace emerging from mixed Israeli neighborhood



Carol Brauner admits that the Sir Charles Clore Jewish-Arab Community Center, in the Wolfson neighborhood of the northern coast Israeli city of Akko is not one of the large, charismatic peace projects that attracts headlines. It's just a small, modest community centre in one of Israel's poorest mixed Arab-Jewish cities. But to the people who use it, the Akko center is a lifeline, providing much-needed services to a sorely neglected area.

The Akko Jewish-Arab association was founded in 1990 by Mohammed Feheli, an Arab born and raised in Akko, with Jewish and Arab residents from Wolfson. The center, which provides a range of educational, social and youth programs, began life in two bomb shelters.

One third of Akko's 47,000 residents is Arab; the other two-thirds are Jewish, primarily new immigrants. The steel and paint industry is the city's main employment backbone, but the industry is flat. Tourism is also flat. The city may be a UNESCO world heritage center, but nobody visits. "Most tourist buses don't even stop at Akko," says Brauner, the center's director of development. "It has a treasure trove of the most amazing architectural digs from all different periods, and could almost be a Caesarea of the north, but no-one goes there."

The center's goals are ambitious - to achieve Arab-Jewish coexistence in Acre; improve the social, educational and cultural structure of Wolfson; promote sexual equality, develop Arab-Jewish youth leadership; reverse the city's school dropout rates, crime, violence and unemployment; and to promote Acre as an integrated Arab-Jewish city of diversity and opportunity.

These are not goals that can be achieved overnight, but the center is working steadily and hopefully towards its objectives with a series of early childhood, youth and parenting programming. Every day after school, for example, the centre offers an after-school enrichment program called Transitions for 200 Jewish and Arab children with language difficulties aged four to eight. Though the Arabic and Jewish children do not work together - they are educated for the first years at school in different languages - they come together for holidays and celebrations.

"İsrail Xəbərləri" is published monthly by the Embassy of Israel in Baku, Azerbaijan. For more information, contact the Media and Public Affairs Department of the Embassy, at press@baku.mfa.gov.il.

The Embassy also publishes each month a business newsletter "İsrail Biznes Dünyası" which details Israel opportunities for the Azeri business community. To subscribe, contact the Trade Department of the Embassy at trade@baku.mfa.gov.il. For further information about Israel you can also visit Israel Government website at www.mfa.gov.il.

Some photos and text in this newsletter are courtesy of Israel's Government Press Office (GPO) and Israel21C.