

# Rita Cosby Interviews Olmert



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PRIME MINISTER EHUD OLMERT

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**Exclusive interview: Former Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, hopes Biden has the "courage" to return to the 2015 Iran nuclear Deal and renegotiate "an even better agreement." Says Trump and Netanyahu both failed as leaders in handling COVID.** Photo: Global Service Institute.

## Interview with Rita Cosby

Olmert, who preceded Netanyahu in office, says about President-elect Biden, "I have no fears whatsoever about his Presidency as far as Israel is concerned." He further stated, "I hope that on the issue of Iran, (Biden) will have the courage to go forward in the direction that was signaled by President Obama, who made the agreement with the Iranians. That he will make maybe a better agreement with Iran that will deter them from even trying to go further in their nuclear program."

Olmert made these comments during an exclusive live webinar interview hosted by Long Island University's Global Service Institute conducted by Institute Chair and Journalist Rita Cosby. The former prime minister says of Biden's approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, "Joe Biden's attitude is the right attitude. It is an attitude based on friendship and commitment to the security of the State of Israel. I have no doubt about it." "He is entirely different from Trump, and to be honest and transparent, I prefer Biden's attitude, because it fits in with what I tried to do." Olmert negotiated in 2008 a failed peace deal with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, and has had continued dialog with the Palestinian leader, even having a high-profile meeting and press conference with him in New York earlier this year.

During the webinar, Olmert acknowledged "Donald Trump was a friendly president to the State of Israel, there is no question about it. We are grateful for him." But he says it's more important that a US leader be good for America. "As

much as we are obsessed with our own needs and our own difficulties and our own challenges, we think that it is very important that the president that will be elected to America will be good for America to start with. If he will be good for America, and that's what will be determined by the majority of people voting in America, then he will be good for the world, and then almost inevitably he will be good for Israel."

In the wide-ranging webinar, Olmert was very critical of Netanyahu and hopes his days in office may soon come to an end. "I am not on his side, I am against him. I think that he has been long had to go, and I hope that he will be going soon. I think that he is not the right person at the right time for the right needs of the State of Israel."

Olmert also believes Israel's healthcare can be a model for America's health care system, "President Obama did something absolutely formidable with Obamacare, but it was insufficient."

He also discussed how he believes both Trump and Netanyahu failed as leaders to handle the Coronavirus pandemic. Israel is currently experiencing a new increase in cases after a second national lockdown was recently lifted. Speaking of Netanyahu, "He failed completely in coping, similar to Donald Trump by the way, in coping with COVID-19 and this was a complete failure, a complete inability to manage this in a proper way."

Below are some of Olmert's other significant statements:

"I must say that Donald Trump was a friendly president to the State of Israel, there is no question about it. We are grateful for him. But of course, one must understand

that even us, as much as we are obsessed with our own needs and our own difficulties and our own challenges, we think that it is very important that the President that will be elected to America will be good for America to start with. If he will be good for America, and that's what will be determined by the majority of people voting in America, then he will be good for the world, and then almost inevitably he will be good for Israel."

"The fact is that Donald Trump invested a lot of time and a lot of energy - and his son-in-law and his senior advisor Jared Kushner - invested a lot of time and a lot of serious effort out of great respect for the two parties involved here in order to try to bring about some kind of agreement. So that is recognized and respected."

However, I think that Joe Biden is a great friend of Israel, and his attitude to the state of Israel is not the same as Trump's. Not that he is less friendly to Israel, but he thinks that the only possible solution for the conflict in the Middle East must be based on two states. Which is also what Trump said, but also, no annexation, no unilateral steps, no building of settlements by the state of Israel, and he said it and he spelled it out in the most explicit way, only in the last few weeks before the elections. So here he is entirely different from Trump, and to be honest and transparent, I prefer Biden's attitude because it fits in with what I tried to do."

"I think that Joe Biden's attitude is the right attitude. It is an attitude based on friendship and commitment to the security of the state of Israel, I have no doubt about it."

Regarding Netanyahu: "I am not on his

side, I am against him. I think that he has been long had to go, and I hope that he will be going soon. I think that he is not the right person at the right time for the right needs of the State of Israel. And I don't want to go about other issues, but I'm talking about the substance of policies. He failed completely in coping, similar to Donald Trump by the way, in coping with COVID-19 and this was a complete failure, a complete inability to manage this in a proper way. We lost lots of lives, and over a million people in Israel are unemployed which is the highest rate of unemployment we ever had in the history of the state of Israel, over 23 percent unemployment. The national debt grew tremendously, people are rioting and demonstrating on a daily basis in all the parts of the state of Israel, and every weekend hundreds of thousands of Israelis riot because they feel that they were neglected by the government, particularly by Netanyahu, in the most important and sensitive and essential part of their lives."

"In America, President Obama did something absolutely formidable in changing the Obamacare, but it was insufficient, and the fact is that there are many who are trying to change it now and to restore it to what it used to be. And I have to tell you something, that the cost of medical services in America because of the inefficiency of the system there, is I think close to 18 percent of the GNP. The cost of the health care system in Israel is 8 percent of the GNP. Now this difference, I mean in terms of America. You're talking about over \$20 trillion dollars a year the cost of medical services when so many millions of Americans are not insured, so there is a problem."