

*Bob Dole*



**NEWS**

**U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS**

**FROM:**

**SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Thursday, May 30, 1996**

**Contact: Clarkson Hine**  
**(202) 224 5358**

## **ISRAEL ELECTIONS**

### **STATEMENT OF SENATE MAJORITY LEADER BOB DOLE**

**CHICAGO -- Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole today issued the following statement regarding the elections in Israel:**

"The results are not yet official but according to near-final reports from Israel, it appears that Benjamin Netanyahu will be the next Prime Minister of Israel. Much of the world has been following the election campaign in Israel during the past few weeks. The democratic process is alive and well in Israel -- this is significant and this is unique in the region. No other country in the Middle East changes political leaders through the ballot box. All Americans respect Israeli democracy and all Americans should support the results of Israel's democratic process.

"The campaign in Israel has been hard fought, and it has been based on fundamental issues -- the future peace and security of the country. But the results of this election should not alter American foreign policy. American foreign policy must be based on our interests, not on individuals. American support for Israel is based on our shared interests and our shared values -- peace, security, democracy, and the rule of law -- not simply on personal relationships.

"With so much focus on the democratic process in Israel, a central fact has been overlooked: the fate of peace in the Middle East is not simply up to Israel. In Israel, both major parties and both candidates support peace. They have different approaches, but their goals are the same: a secure Israel living within recognized borders and at peace with all her neighbors. Likud's platform, for example, states clearly: 'Peace will be a central aim of Israel's policy.'

"Extremist states and movements -- Iran, Iraq, Syria, Islamic terrorist groups -- pose the biggest obstacles to lasting peace. And despite the shuttle diplomacy of the Clinton Administration, President Assad of Syria has not demonstrated peaceful intentions. Syria continues to occupy Lebanon, continues to harbor terrorists, and continues its close alliance with Iran. Under these circumstances, comprehensive peace in the Middle East remains a very difficult goal no matter who is Prime Minister in Israel. Moreover, a key to peace must be compliance with any peace agreements that are achieved.

"Many pundits have been quick to point to Benjamin Netanyahu as a 'hard-liner' or a 'hawk.' I would point out, however, that history is filled with examples of so-called 'hawks' being very effective peacemakers and diplomats -- Richard Nixon and China, Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat at Camp David, and Ronald Reagan and the Cold War. I well understand Likud's emphasis on 'peace through strength' and I am confident I can work closely with the next Israeli Prime Minister -- and that the Clinton Administration will continue its close cooperation with Israel.

"If his lead holds, Prime Minister Netanyahu will face many challenges. The first one will be to form a governing coalition. The Israeli electorate is deeply divided and the Israeli political landscape has changed dramatically. New parties, such as 'Israel on the Ascent' headed by Natan Sharansky, gained strong support.

"Finally, if final results confirm current reports, Prime Minister Peres will be joining the opposition. I have enjoyed a productive working relationship with Prime Minister Peres. I want to extend my warmest wishes to him. I know what it is like to win close elections and win control of the Senate. And I know what it is like to lose close elections and lose control of the Senate. Prime Minister Peres has served his country with dignity and eloquence in a variety of positions for many decades."

###