

RELEASE IN FULL

CONFIDENTIAL

January 24, 2011

For: Hillary
From: Sid
Re: "The Palestine Papers" and SOTU

I. "The Palestine Papers"

So far this morning not a single word has been published or broadcast in the US press on the most extensive disclosure of internal documents on the Middle East peace process by Al Jazeera and The Guardian, a more significant cache than from Wikileaks. And already the Middle East is consumed with the revelations. I've enclosed below, just in case you haven't seen asap, the initial Guardian report and the Guardian column by Jonathan Freedland, the chief columnist on the subject in that newspaper, the Tom Friedman of Britain, a friend of mine, who also writes a column in the Jewish Chronicle, the leading Jewish newspaper in London. It all speaks for itself.

II. SOTU

For what it's worth (with a full sense of duty and futility), the Democrats should respond to the Republican response to the SOTU in the following manner: The Republicans have designated Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Weird) to give their formal televised response, but La Pasionaria of the Tea Party, Rep. Michelle Bachmann (R-Fringe) is also giving a response at the same time. Therefore, the Democratic talking points should be to characterize the President's SOTU as the program to meet the challenges the nation is facing while characterizing the GOP response as politically divisive and confused. In other words, the President is proposing policies, substance, solutions; the Republicans are embroiled in their own political mess and thus overshadowing whatever confusing policy prescriptions they might have. The way to do this: The Republicans are a politically divided party delivering two responses. The Republicans are divided and can't agree on a position. Speaker Boehner can't control his Republican members to deliver a single response. After Tucson, the Republicans have become even more divided and unable to control their extreme elements. Etc.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/23/palestine-papers-expose-peace-concession?intcmp=23>

Secret papers reveal slow death of Middle East peace process

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/jan/23/palestine-papers-israel-peace-partner?intemp=239>

Palestine papers: Now we know. Israel had a peace partner

The classified documents show Palestinians willing to go to extreme lengths and Israel holding a firm line on any peace deal

- [Jonathan Freedland](#)
- [guardian.co.uk](#), Sunday 23 January 2011 22.18 GMT
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Who will be most damaged by this extraordinary glimpse into the reality of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process? Perhaps the first casualty will be Palestinian national pride, their collective sense of dignity in adversity badly wounded by the papers revealed today.

Many on the Palestinian streets will recoil to read not just the concessions offered by their representatives – starting with the yielding of those parts of East Jerusalem settled by Israeli Jews – but the language in which those concessions were made.

To hear their chief negotiator, Saeb Erekat, tell the Israelis that the Palestinians are ready to concede "the biggest *Yerushalayim* in Jewish history" – even using the Hebrew word for the city – will strike many as an act of humiliation.

Referring to Ariel Sharon as a "friend" will offend those Palestinians who still revile the former prime minister as the "Butcher of Beirut" for his role in the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

Telling Tzipi Livni, [Israel's](#) then foreign minister, on the eve of national elections "I would vote for you" will strike many Palestinians as grovelling of a shameful kind.

It is this tone which will stick in the throat just as much as the substantive concessions on land or, as the Guardian will reveal in coming days, the intimate level of secret co-operation with Israeli security forces or readiness of Palestinian negotiators to give way on the highly charged question of the right of return for Palestinian refugees.

Of course it should be said that this cache of papers is not exhaustive and may have been leaked selectively; other documents might provide a rather different impression. Nevertheless, these texts will do enormous damage to the standing of the Palestinian Authority and to the Fatah party that leads it. Erekat himself may never recover his credibility.

But something even more profound is at stake: these documents could discredit among Palestinians the very notion of negotiation with Israel and the two-state solution that underpins it.

And yet there might also be an unexpected boost here for the Palestinian cause. Surely international opinion will see concrete proof of how far the Palestinians have been willing to go, ready to move up to and beyond their "red lines", conceding ground that would once have been unthinkable – none more so than on Jerusalem.

In the blame game that has long attended [Middle East](#) diplomacy, this could see a shift in the Palestinians' favour.

The effect of these papers on Israel will be the reverse.