

Malawi to Be First African State with Embassy in Jerusalem

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Malawi will be the first African state to place its Israeli embassy in Jerusalem. It makes sense. Malawi has had diplomatic relations with Israel since 1964. When other African states were bribed or pressured by the Arabs to break relations with Israel after the Six-Day War, Malawi refused. The report on this latest welcome announcement is here: “Malawi to be first African state with embassy in Jerusalem,” by Lahav Harkov, [Jerusalem Post](#), November 4, 2020 15:47

Malawi announced on Tuesday it would become the first African nation to open an embassy in Jerusalem.

While visiting Israel, Malawi Foreign Minister Eisenhower Mkaka described the decision as a “bold and significant step.”

Standing next to Mkaka in Jerusalem, Israeli Foreign Minister

Gabi Ashkenazi stated, "I look forward to your embassy opening soon, and I'm sure that more African leaders will follow this decision."...

As with the United Arab Emirates' normalization of ties with Israel that were followed soon after by Bahrain, and then Bahrain was followed by Sudan, a diplomatic case of follow-the-leader, or come-on-in-the-water's-fine, it is likely that Malawi's move of its embassy to Jerusalem will lead to other countries in Africa doing the same. The most likely candidate is Togo, which in U.N. votes has stood out as one of very few African nations to abstain, or even to vote no, on anti-Israel resolutions. In late December 2017, for example, a U.N. Resolution condemning the Trump administration's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel passed with 128 yes votes, 35 abstentions, and only nine countries voting "No." These nine were:

Guatemala
Honduras
Israel
Marshall Islands
Micronesia
Nauru
Palau
Togo
United States

Wondering why Togo held such a firm pro-Israel position, I discovered that the Togolese Foreign Minister Robert Dussey plays a large part in fashioning his country's stance toward the Jewish state. Here is part of an article about his visit to Israel in June, 2018: "I will do everything for Israel, Togolese foreign minister says," by Erez Linn, [Israel Hayom](#), June 24, 2018:

Togolese Foreign Minister Professor Robert Dussey begins his

interview [with Israel Hayom] with the declaration that “I came here to reassure [Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu that Togo will support Israel. Our support for Israel is constant.”

Officially the minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and African Integration, Dussey is one of the strongest political figures in his country (and the entire continent). He thinks of Israel as his second home, both spiritually and politically. So much so, in fact, that he can't even remember how many times he has visited Israel.

The reason for this deep connection with the people of Zion may lie in the fact that before he was appointed minister, for 10 years, Dussey served in a number of different roles in the Community of the Beatitudes. For this Catholic group, the welfare of Israel and the Jewish people is a top priority. Ever since he was a Catholic monk and to this day, Dussey recites daily prayers in Hebrew, maintaining a strong spiritual bond with Israel.

Dussey is 46 years old. He began his career in the academic world (he still works as a professor of political philosophy). During our interview, [for Israel Hayom] he spontaneously begins to sing the Shema Yisrael prayer in his community's special tune. At another point during the interview, he mentioned Psalms 137:5: “If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill.”

“I have a personal link with Israel,” he says. “I was a monk and I was a member of Community of Beatitudes that prays every day for the Jewish people. Every day we pray for peace for Israel and particularly peace in Jerusalem. On the weekend we celebrate Shabbat together, and after the prayer we share the Shabbat bread and sing Shabbat songs in Hebrew. If you have this spiritual link with the Jewish people and with Israel and you have to protect the Israeli people.”

"For me, the Israeli people and the Jewish people are, first and foremost, the people of God. It is a personal decision, it is my own conviction, and I will do everything for this conviction. I spent more than 10 years of my life praying for peace in Jerusalem, praying for the Jewish people and for Israel. For me, Israel is very important and I need to defend Israel and the people of Israel."

That's quite a friend for Israel to have in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Israelis are obviously determined to do their utmost to cement, through trade, technology, and tourism, ties to those Arab states that have normalized relations with it. And they will do what they can to help the economies of those black African countries that move their embassies to Jerusalem. Malawi has always maintained its relations with Israel and its farmers have benefited from that connection. They are especially interested in Israel's continuous advances in drip irrigation. In 2014, Malawi Vice President Saulos Chilima described his trip to Israel as an eye-opener, saying the farming lessons learned in Israel (where Malawian students study agronomy) have the potential of boosting Malawi's economy through increased exports of farm produce.

"We have seen how our friends can do a lot with very little, and if Israel can, why can't we," the vice-president said upon his return from Israel. Israel is "a desert but manages to produce US\$5 billion through irrigative agriculture."

Now there will be even more Israeli help than before to Malawian farmers. And Togolese farmers, assuming my hunch is correct and Togo is the next among African states to move its embassy to Jerusalem, will benefit from the same kind of aid as Malawi: Israeli assistance in drip irrigation, waste water management, and solar energy, all areas where Israel is a world leader.

What African state would follow Togo? I think it will be Ghana, overwhelmingly Christian (72%) and the first sub-Saharan African state with which Israel, in 1957, established diplomatic relations. Ghana and Israel were the only countries to recognize the Christian state of Biafra that had declared its independence from Nigeria in 1967. Following the Yom Kippur War, 21 African states, pressured by the Arabs, severed their diplomatic ties to Israel; Ghana was one of them. These ties were renewed in 2011. The Israeli mission to Ghana presented its credentials to President John Evans Atta Mills in that year; after President Mills accepted the ambassador's credentials, he told the mission that Ghana had a large Israeli business community and "Ghanaians love Israel. It's not unusual to see cars with Israeli flags on them." Since 2011, more Israeli investments have been made in Ghana; these are among the ties that bind. The Ghanaians have watched, with alarm, Boko Haram's rampages against Christians in Nigeria; as a consequence they are more sympathetic to Israel as a victim of Islamic terror.

Malawi, then Togo, then Ghana, followed by....? *Faites vos jeux, mesdames et messieurs*. Make your educated guesses right here. In Africa, for Israel, things at last are looking up.

Many a little makes a muckle, as they used to say in Scotland.

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