

From the Desk of



Abraham Foxman

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Dear <<Elected Salutation>>,



I am urging you to co-sponsor the Anwar Sadat Centennial Celebration Act ([S. 266](#)) a bipartisan bill.

For more information and/or to cosponsor, please contact **Doug Dynes** (doug_dynes@hatch.senate.gov) and **JC Cardinale** (jc_Cardinale@hatch.senate.gov) in **Senator Hatch's** office (202) 224-5251 or **Dana Stroul** (dana_stroul@foreign.senate.gov) and **Chris Barr** (Christopher_Barr@foreign.senate.gov) in **Senator Cardin's** office (202) 228-2948.

The **twentieth century** was characterized by historical figures who had a profound impact on their societies and the world around them. Some were the source of incomparable evil - - Hitler, Stalin, Mao. **Others are known for the revolutionary good they brought to bear - - Churchill, Mandela, Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Anwar Sadat was one of those who deserves recognition for the important positive change that he brought about.

Yes, it is true that the Middle East is still in turmoil; that most of the Arab and Muslim world has still not recognized the legitimacy of the State of Israel; and that Palestinians still engage in terror against the Jewish State.

Yes, there is still much work to be done.

But Anwar Sadat, through his courageous outreach to Israel, set the standard for what could be achieved.

Let's recall what things were like before Sadat. It was conventional wisdom that no Arab leader could or would ever make peace with Israel. So-called evidence about Islam and its views of Jews were cited to deny the possibility of recognition. Jews were looked down upon as "Dhimmis," and the notion of a Muslim leader treating a Jewish State as an equal in the heartland of the Muslim Middle East was deemed impossible and wishful thinking.

Who can forget that historic day in November, 1977 when the president of Egypt descended from his plane onto the tarmac at the airport, setting forth on his mission of peace?

All the clichés and conventional wisdoms were thrown out the window. The notion of inevitability itself was challenged - - wise leaders could change the course of history.

There were, of course, complications and caveats. Peace with Egypt remained a cold one. It didn't spread to other countries in the region, and Sadat was assassinated four years after his visit, though that tragic event was more attributed to Islamic extremists disgruntled with Sadat's unwillingness to impose fundamentalist Islam on his nation.

Nevertheless, the seal had been broken. The largest and most important Arab country had made peace with its Jewish neighbor. This meant that the full-scale Arab wars of the past - - 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973 - - were things of the past. This meant that in many ways the Middle East would not simply be seen as Israel versus the Arabs, but Israel and the moderate Arabs (those either at peace or possibly at peace with Israel) versus the extremists. This meant that the Arab boycott of Israel would never again have the same potency. And this gave hope that someday the Arab world would recognize that good relations with the Jewish State could bring benefits to all the peoples of the Middle East.

We are now living at a time of great turmoil in the region, indeed greater turmoil than in decades. Many of the positive impacts of the Sadat peace initiative seem far removed from current reality.

It is exactly for that reason that recognition by the United States of Sadat through a Congressional Gold Medal is a timely idea and one that should be implemented expeditiously.

It would send a message of belief and hope - - that the vision of a Middle East not beset by war, terrorism, hatred and extremism - - is still possible and urgently needed. It would send a message that change is always an option, that decisions can be made that can save lives, prevent future wars, and improves the lives of people throughout the region.

Sadat's decision to make peace was a complicated one. Partly it was a product of restoring Egyptian pride after the humiliation of the Six-Day war. Partly it was from the realization during the Yom Kippur war that even with a surprise attack, Israel could not be defeated militarily. And partly it was from a desire to move away from the Soviet Union and toward the United States as a reliable partner.

Most important, and a message that needs to be absorbed today, Sadat recognized that relations with Israel did not have to be a zero-sum one. What was good for Israel was not necessarily bad for Egypt. All could benefit from peace.

If that message alone would reenter the consciousness of Middle East leaders once again, then honoring Anwar Sadat with a Congressional Gold Medal would have been worth it many times over.

Sincerely,
Abe Foxman

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