

Top 5 Questionable Claims Senators Are Likely to Hear From U.S. Ambassador to Israel-nominee David Friedman At His Confirmation Hearing

February 15, 2017

(1) The “kapos” problem

Likely Claim: Friedman will likely seek to play down concerns that he called fellow Jews “kapos” by claiming he only did it once, or that he did it in the heat of the moment, under attack. He will also likely suggest that his use of that term is out of character for the man he is and that he regrets having used it.

The Facts: Friedman is on record three times comparing fellow American Jews to “kapos.” None of these instances occurred in the “heat of the moment” as a response to an attack. Rather, two came in op-eds Friedman authored and published on a far right-wing Israeli media website – the first attacking liberal Jews in general, the second using attacks on liberal Jews to argue why Jews should vote for Donald Trump. The third came in the context of a question designed explicitly to give him an opportunity to walk back his previous statements – and, notably, this instance came after Trump’s election and at a time when Friedman was already talking about being the next U.S. ambassador to Israel (even before he was nominated).

- In July 2015ⁱⁱ, Friedman published an op-ed entitled, “Liberal Jews: Easy to Love, Hard to Like.” In it he wrote (among other things):

Unfortunately, hearkening back to the days of the Kapos during the Nazi regime and well before that, there is a history of a minority of Jews betraying their own. I don’t think all liberal Jews are ‘self-hating,’ as some of my colleagues like to describe them. But I do think that, like most liberals, they suffer a cognitive disconnect in identifying good and evil.

- In May 2016ⁱⁱⁱ, Friedman published an op-ed entitled, “Read Peter Beinart and you’ll vote Donald Trump.” In it he doubled down on the “kapo” slander, writing:

Are J Street supporters really as bad as kapos? The answer, actually, is no. They are far worse than kapos – Jews who turned in their fellow Jews in the Nazi death camps. The kapos faced extraordinary cruelty and who knows what any of us would have done under those circumstances to save a loved one? But J

Street? They are just smug advocates of Israel's destruction delivered from the comfort of their secure American sofas – it's hard to imagine anyone worse.

- In December 2016^{iv}, Friedman tripled down on this slander, in response to a question posed during a session at the Saban Forum in Washington:

At a private session this month at the Saban Forum, an annual gathering of Israeli and American foreign policy figures, Mr. Friedman declined to disavow the comments and even intensified the sentiment. Questioned by Jeffrey Goldberg, the editor in chief of the Atlantic, Mr. Friedman was asked if he would meet with various groups, including J Street. Mr. Friedman said he would probably meet with individuals but not with the group, according to several people who attended. Mr. Goldberg then raised the kapos comparison and asked if he stood by it. Mr. Friedman did not back away. "They're not Jewish, and they're not pro-Israel," he said, according to the people in the room.

Moreover, the "kapos" slander is not the only time Friedman has evoked the Nazis to attack those with whom he disagrees. Specifically:

- He attacked Jewish Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) of New York over the Iran nuclear deal, accusing him of "validating the worst appeasement of terrorism since Munich." (August 2015^v)
- He has suggested that the demand to remove settlers from the West Bank as part of a peace agreement is racist and similar to a Nazi policy, stating that calling for the removal of Israeli settlers from the West Bank is a policy of making the area, "as the Nazis said, Judenrein (devoid of Jews)..." (September 2016^{vi} and November 2016^{vii})
- He attacked the New York Times for its coverage of Donald Trump, writing that, "If only the Times had reported on the Nazi death camps with the same fervor as its failed last-minute attempt to conjure up alleged victims of Donald Trump, imagine how many lives could have been saved..." (October 2016^{viii})
- He attacked the JCPOA (and its supporters) by calling the agreement "undoubtedly the worst international accord since Neville Chamberlain conceded Eastern Europe to Hitler." (July 2015^{ix})

(2) Other Undiplomatic Language

Likely Claim: In addition to distancing himself from the "kapos" slur, Friedman will likely try to minimize concerns that by character he is undiplomatic. He will likely suggest that using rough language – whether Nazi slurs or other ugly accusations – is out of character for him, occurs only rarely, and he regrets it.

The Facts: Friedman has a well-documented history of slandering/smearing those with whom he disagrees. In addition to evoking the Nazis, he is particularly fond of calling opponents anti-Semitic, anti-Israel, and/or sympathetic to terrorists. Specifically:

- In November 2016^x, Friedman attacked the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and Senator Al Franken for expressing concerns about an ad released by the Trump campaign that was widely viewed as anti-Semitic (and openly^{xi} celebrated as such by anti-Semites), stating, "This is an absolute abuse of the accusation of anti-Semitism..." And suggesting that the ADL "has completely destroyed and perverted their own mandate by going after this type of criticism." He went on to argue that "This is what happens

when people take these insane arguments to their logical extension. They lose all credibility, and frankly, they sound like morons."

- In October 2016^{xii}, speaking at a public event on the eve of U.S. elections, Friedman suggested to the crowd that Hillary Clinton is in league with terrorists, stating, "*Who does Hillary Clinton get her advice from? ...What about Huma Abedin? Grew up in Saudi Arabia, close connections to the Muslim Brotherhood [voice in crowd says, "and al Qaida"], and al Qaida, right.*" [He later insisted that saying "and al Qaida, right" was not an endorsement of that accusation – the video tells a different story].
- In a September 2016^{xiii} interview in the Israeli press, Friedman called the demand to remove settlers from the West Bank as part of an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement "*an entirely racist and anti-Semitic position...*"
- In an August 2016^{xiv} interview in the Israeli press, Friedman attacked Hillary Clinton, saying, "*I don't think she particularly likes Israel...*"
- In May 2016^{xv}, Friedman published an op-ed slamming the reaction of President Obama and Secretary Kerry to a terrorist attack and suggested that it was a form of "*blatant anti-Semitism.*"
- In March 2016,^{xvi} Friedman published an op-ed slamming former president Bill Clinton, writing that "*Clinton was more dangerous to the interests of Israel than any president since Eisenhower.*"
- In February 2016^{xvii}, Friedman published an op-ed suggesting that longstanding, bipartisan U.S. policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was the result of the "*The U.S. State Department – with a hundred-year history of anti-Semitism...*"
- In August 2015^{xviii}, Friedman published an op-ed attacking President Obama, stating, "*the blatant anti-Semitism emanating from our President and his sycophantic minions is palpable and very disturbing.*" He also accused President Obama of "*appealing to the vilest anti-Semitic biases of the population*" and called it "*the worst type of Chicago-style politics and no other president in my lifetime has descended to such despicable behavior.*"

(3) Views on peace/two-state solution

Likely Claim: Friedman is likely to respond to questions about his views on settlements and the possible solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by arguing that (a) he does, in principle, support the two state solution – or at least accepts it, if it is the policy of the U.S.; and (b) the real obstacle to peace is not settlements or any Israeli policy – the problem is Palestinian hatred of Jews and refusal to accept Israel's existence.

The Facts: Friedman has made clear – on the record, over and over – that he is ideologically opposed to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

➤ In an op-ed published in February 2016^{xix}, Friedman wrote:

"There has never been a 'two-state solution' – only a 'two-state narrative.' He also referred to it as " this non-existent 'solution,'" a " scam," a " damaging anachronism," and " an illusory solution in search of a non-existent problem." He described it as " an illusion that serves the worst intentions of both the United States and the Palestinian Arabs. It has never been a solution, only a narrative. But even the narrative itself now needs to end."

- In an op-ed published in August 2016^{xx}, Friedman suggested that the entire thinking about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is wrong, and that the Palestinians and their demand for a state don't even figure into it:

"This is not about battle about land. It's an ideological battle about whether there will be a Jewish state, and it's a battle between a radical jihadism and the rest of the Muslim world."

- Speaking on video in September 2016^{xxi}, Friedman made the case for permanent Israeli control over West Bank, arguing that:

"...under most calculations, if you took the entire state of Israel, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea...if you annexed all of Judea and Samaria into Israel, the Jewish population would still be about 65%... If you study the numbers you'll see that the whole idea that we have to jettison Judea and Samaria to retain the Jewish characteristics of Israel is just not true." [Note the use of the word "we" in the last sentence].

- In an op-ed published in October 2015^{xxii}, Friedman wrote candidly about his view that Palestinian actions/policies are irrelevant to what Israel should do vis-à-vis settlements - a view predicated on the belief that there is no occupation and the entire West Bank belongs to Israel. He wrote [again explicitly from the perspective of someone identifying with the settlers and Israeli right - note the use of the word "we"]:

"If, say, next month the Palestinians renounce violence, are we really prepared to cede to them Gush Etzion, Maale Adumim, Bet El, Ariel, etc.? Of course not. Separate and apart from the threshold issue of trust, Judea and Samaria historically have deep Jewish roots and were validly captured 48 years ago in a defensive war – far more legitimately than through the atrocious acts that today dictate the borders of most countries. And, insofar as they were captured from the Kingdom of Jordan, which almost immediately abandoned any interest in the region, they are not occupied territory."

(4) Ethnic Cleansing

Likely Claim: If asked about his long record of support for settlements, Friedman will likely share his well-developed talking points (many listed above), accusing those who call for a freeze on settlements or removal of settlements of supporting a policy of ethnic cleaning – or, as he has stated previously, embracing the Nazi policy of seeking to make an area "Judenrein" (September 2016^{xxiii} and November 2016^{xxiv}). He will likely punctuate this point by reminding people that there are Arabs living in Israel.

The Facts: Cynically exploiting the trauma that Jews experienced at the hands of the Nazis in order to make the case for settlements is abhorrent, inflammatory and misleading.

- The call for Israeli settlers to leave or be removed from the West Bank as part of a peace agreement has nothing in common with the genocidal policies of the Nazis. It also has nothing to do with the question of whether Jews, as Jews, can live in the occupied territories or in a future Palestinian state.
- It should be recalled that there were no Israelis living in the West Bank in June 1967. The Israelis who have since settled there have done so either out of ideology - an ideology that includes a desire to remove Palestinians from the land - or because they have walked into a political trap, with the active encouragement of their governments - Labor as well as Likud. Yes, there was a small Jewish presence in the West Bank prior to 1948, but demanding a "right of return" to Jewish property in the West Bank opens a very dangerous Pandora 's Box about the legitimacy of Palestinian claims to a "right of return" to property they owned in Israel before 1948.
- It is absolutely true that Arab citizens live alongside and (in theory, if not always in practice) as equals to Israel's Jewish citizens. This diversity and equality within Israel — a key facet of Israeli democracy — is something for which Israelis and supporters of Israel justifiably feel pride. And it stands in stark contrast to the situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, where for nearly 50 years, Israeli settlers have acted, and been treated by Israel, as a super-class – afforded not only the rights of Israeli citizens but granted the special privileges of a favored minority to which Israeli politicians pander.
- The Palestinians, in contrast, have for nearly 50 years lived under Israeli military rule — a separate and unequal legal system in which they enjoy few rights and virtually every aspect of their lives is controlled by Israeli authorities who are in no way accountable to them, but who are accountable to the settlers. It is a situation in which for 50 years Israel has systematically abused its power to take land, monopolize resources, and displace Palestinians in the service of a strategy — often expressed unambiguously and without apology — to make the occupation permanent.
- It is reasonable to hope that, once peace is secured, people of all faiths will be welcome to live in Palestine. However, one of the key aspects of sovereignty is the authority to determine who lives within a state's borders and under what conditions. Israel insists on this authority, rightly; so, too, will any future Palestinian state.

(5) Whose Ambassador?

Likely Claim: If challenged about his pre-existing ties to and inside Israel, Friedman will no doubt claim that his personal ideology and past actions notwithstanding, he can and will faithfully represent President Trump, American interests and the American people – not the settlers or the pro-settler agenda.

The Facts: Friedman has a complicated identity when it comes to Israel – so much so that, based on his own words and his very public record of leadership and activism, there is a very real question of whether he would

be willing or able to distinguish between American interests and the specific set of Israeli interests he has worked for decades to promote.

- He already owns a home in Jerusalem, where he intends to live as ambassador.^{xxv}
- He has worked personally to raise millions of dollars for settlements.^{xxvi}
- He has written a regular column for a right-wing Israeli media outlet^{xxvii} – a column in which he has repeatedly taken controversial positions vis-à-vis Israeli domestic issues, including, notably, attacking 20% of Israel’s population (its Arab citizens) as “disloyal.”^{xxviii}
- He has used the words “we” and “us” when referring to Israelis and settlers, in writing and in speaking^{xxix}.
- Notably, the settlers share the view that Friedman is one of them; as a settler spokeswoman put it: “We think that David Friedman is going to be our representative in the United States.”^{xxx}
- Overall, his views are so extreme, so dogmatic, so closely identified with the narrow agenda of Israeli nationalistic ideological settlers, and so vociferously expressed in his actions, speech, and writings, that it is difficult to imagine how he could simply put them aside upon being confirmed as ambassador, or leave them behind when traveling to Israel on a newly-issued diplomatic passport.

ⁱ <http://jewishinsider.com/9953/daily-kickoff-highlights-from-the-saban-forum-bibi-encourages-haim-to-host-peace-summit-nyt-on-ben-platts-performance-in-dear-evan-hansen/>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/17315>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/18828>

^{iv} <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/15/us/politics/donald-trump-david-friedman-israel-ambassador.html>

^v <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/17349>

^{vi} <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.741515>

^{vii} <http://www.algemeiner.com/2016/11/01/trump-campaign-unveils-new-policy-will-ask-justice-department-to-probe-anti-israel-intimidation-on-us-college-campuses/>

^{viii} <http://m.jpost.com/Opinion/First-100-days-470563#article=6022OTg2Mzk4RENEMUJCQjdBNzA4NzAzMDYyNkJOEuzRjQ=>

^{ix} <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/17249>

^x <http://jewishinsider.com/9705/trump-advisor-david-friedman-jewish-criticism-of-ad-abuse-of-the-anti-semitic-label/>

^{xi} <http://mediamatters.org/blog/2016/11/07/trump-s-white-nationalist-supporters-love-his-nazi-closing-ad-because-it-blasts-evil-jews/214369>

^{xii} <https://youtu.be/8S7mtXvU7os>

^{xiii} <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.741515>

^{xiv} <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4837669,00.html>

^{xv} <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/18828>

^{xvi} <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/18526>

^{xvii} <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/18368>

^{xviii} <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/17419>

^{xix} <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/18368>

^{xx} <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4837669,00.html>

^{xxi} <http://www.jerusalemonline.com/news/world-news/the-israeli-connection/watch-trumps-top-advisor-voices-his-support-for-jewish-population-in-west-bank-23841>

^{xxii} <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/17660>

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- ^{xxiii} <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.741515>
- ^{xxiv} <http://www.algemeiner.com/2016/11/01/trump-campaign-unveils-new-policy-will-ask-justice-department-to-probe-anti-israel-intimidation-on-us-college-campuses/>
- ^{xxv} <http://agenciaajn.com/us-ambassador-friedman-to-reside-in-jerusalem/>
- ^{xxvi} <http://forward.com/news/breaking-news/357324/david-friedman-raised-millions-for-radical-west-bank-jewish-settlers/>
- ^{xxvii} <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Author.aspx/1405>
- ^{xxviii} <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/17849>
- ^{xxix} <http://www.jerusalemonline.com/news/world-news/the-israeli-connection/watch-trumps-top-advisor-voices-his-support-for-jewish-population-in-west-bank-23841> and <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/17660>
- ^{xxx} <http://forward.com/news/israel/359902/inside-the-west-bank-settlement-that-trumps-envoy-david-friedman-loves-best/>