

Our towns

AJC exec: UN vote shows ‘who our friends are’

SUSAN BLOOM
Special to NJ Jewish News

Speaking in Princeton, the top executive of the American Jewish Committee praised the Obama administration and eight other countries who rejected a United Nations vote to declare Palestine a non-member observer state.

“Each of us who cares about Israel should commit to memory the nine who voted ‘no’ and the 41 who abstained, along with the 33 in 1947 who voted to support the creation of a Jewish state,” AJC national executive director David Harris said Nov. 29, speaking at The Jewish Center of Princeton. “Obama was a leader among the nine in today’s vote. In a crunch,

we need to know who our friends are and who they’re not and consider them in our travel plans. Canada and the Czech Republic need to know that we know of their support; France and Italy, who voted yes to the resolution, need to know how we feel about them as well.”

Harris also praised Sens. Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and Charles Schumer (D-NY) for quickly responding to the UN’s vote and ensuring the administration’s opposition.

Harris’s talk to a packed sanctuary of over 250 attendees came on the same day as the General Assembly vote and — as he noted in his talk — 65 years to the day after a General Assembly vote paved the way for the establishment of both a Jewish and an

Arab state in the area.

Of the UN’s 193 member nations, 138 delegates, including France’s, voted in favor of upgrading Palestine’s status. Germany, Great Britain, and 39 other countries abstained.

Echoing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Harris said the vote “doesn’t advance peace; it pushes it backward.”

“I wait for far-sighted Arab leaders like Anwar Sadat, who overcame his own anti-Semitism to recognize that he cared more about strengthening Egyptian children than targeting Israeli ones,” Harris said, “and King Hussein of Jordan, who ultimately worked to put war behind the Jordanians, and peace, growth, and development before them.

“I want to believe there are other Sadats and Husseins out there who will put the interests of peace” above other personal or

political motivations, he said.

Harris’s talk was billed as an AJC Central New Jersey-Jewish Federation of Princeton Mercer Bucks Community Forum.

‘Building bridges’

Harris criticized Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas for “being absent from the peace table with Netanyahu” since succeeding Yasser Arafat in 2005.

“The core issue remains the legitimacy of Jewish self-determination and whether Palestinians will accept the legitimacy of Jewish sovereignty. If yes, peace isn’t only possible but inevitable,” he said. “If no, we’re negotiating with ourselves.”

Harris said he and the AJC support a two-state agreement as “the only viable political solution to an extraordinarily complex conflict,” adding “Israelis are not consigned to an endless history of conflict.”

However, he cited “real threats to Israel today” from Iran, Hizbullah, Hamas, and radical Islam and urged attendees to be “sober” about the reality of the situation in Israel.

Following Harris’s hour-long talk and follow-up question-and-answer session, audience members gave their assessment. “Harris’s comments



American Jewish Committee executive director David Harris discusses Global Challenges Facing Israel and the U.S. during a joint AJC-Jewish Federation of Princeton Mercer Bucks Community Forum at The Jewish Center of Princeton on Nov. 29.

were extremely informative, powerful, and emotionally stirring,” Richard Anderson of Lawrenceville said.

“When he’s not here speaking to us, he’s out there speaking for us around the world,” said The Jewish Center’s Rabbi Adam Feldman. He praised the AJC for its efforts to “build bridges with a

Continued on next page



Joining AJC executive director David Harris, third from right, are, from left, Andy Frank, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Princeton Mercer Bucks; Gil Gordon, Central NJ AJC board member; Mark Merkowitz, federation president; Michael Feldstein, Central NJ AJC president, and his wife, Lori; Kim Pimley, Central NJ AJC past president; Rabbi Adam Feldman of The Jewish Center of Princeton; and John Rosen, NJ Area AJC director.

High school senior discovers a different Israel

ROBERT WIENER
NJIN Staff Writer

Terrence Kuo is a 17-year-old Taiwanese American who considers himself an atheist. He has no Jewish ancestry.

And yet he jumped at the opportunity to spend last summer in Israel studying architecture at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa.

A resident of Cranbury, Kuo is now in his senior year at Princeton High School. Before moving to New Jersey, he attended Bronx

High School of Science, where he was encouraged by a guidance counselor to attend summer school in Israel. He applied for the SciTech program Technion offers for international high school students.

“I want to study engineering in college and I thought it would be unfit to study the subject without any prior life experience. I thought an international experience would be nice,” he told *NJ Jewish News* in an Oct. 23 phone interview.

In his world history class at Princeton High, Kuo developed

an interest in “the conflict of the Jews and Arabs. It really fascinated me. I wondered what it would be like to live in a state where there was all this conflict.

“When I got there, there wasn’t much talk about it,” he said. “But after awhile I started to talk with students and teachers who said they were very proud of their religion, very proud of being Jewish. I found that pretty interesting.”

Most of the other 31 students in the program were Jewish, he said.

Dispute his interest in engineering, Kuo was assigned to take

Terrence Kuo said Israel would be the place to return to to do testing on solar panels.

courses in architecture and come up with his own research project. He and a partner chose solar panel design.

Working under a tight deadline of just four days, they created two alternative designs, then used complex mathematical formulas to calculate each one’s efficiency.

That intense experience could be a preview of coming attrac-



See **Senior** page 6