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Jerusalem hosts Pacific Island presidents

January 21, 2010

Jerusalem Dispatch staff

The presidents, ministers of foreign affairs and ambassadors of the Pacific Island nations of the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Nauru arrived in Jerusalem Thursday for a nearly week-long visit to enhance their relationship with Israel and expand ties.

The trip is being implemented under the auspices of Project Interchange, an institute of the American Jewish Committee, in collaboration with Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

During their visit, Micronesian President Emanuel Mori and Nauru President Marcus Stephen will meet with top-ranking leaders, including Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, President Shimon Peres and Foreign Affairs Minister Avigdor Liberman.

Both Pacific Island countries regularly back Israel in United Nations voting. Of 19 anti-Israel UN resolutions introduced in 2008 and 2009 Nauru sided with Israel 80 percent of the time and abstained from voting on the other resolutions. According to Marlene Moses, Nauru's ambassador to the UN, the island nation often comes under attack for aligning with Israel.

"Without question, the pressure to vote against Israel is great, and we do not have the luxury of hiding behind a secret ballot at the UN," Moses wrote in an opinion piece published in the [Jerusalem Post](#). "I am quite sure that many countries fail to vote their conscience for fear of seeing their vote posted on the public tally. Nauru, with a long tradition of independence and voting our conscience, has no such qualms. In fact, we are often stunned by the cowardice demonstrated by countries far larger and more powerful than our own."

In addition to discussing issues of global and strategic importance, each of the Pacific Island ministers of foreign affairs is expected to sign a Memorandum of Understanding expanding agreements on a number of consular matters with Israel's Foreign Affairs Ministry.

At the same time, these leaders will have the opportunity to enhance the ties on a host

of issues, including healthcare, solar energy, water, clean technologies and other innovations of importance to the Pacific Island nations in which Israel is a world leader.

In addition to official meetings and briefings with high-level decision makers, the delegation will also tour Jerusalem, visit Yad Vashem, look at eco-tourism near the Dead Sea and meet with experts at Hadassah Medical Center to discuss initiatives in diabetes prevention and education. They will visit Sderot, tour Christian sites throughout the country and meet directors of organizations promoting Arab-Jewish coexistence. The delegations will also be briefed on various security threats Israel faces.

Israel invited the presidents of Palau and the Marshall Islands to participate in this week's program as well, but both countries declined.

Formerly known as Pleasant Island, Nauru is the world's smallest island nation. It was colonized by Germany, administered by the League of Nations after World War I and occupied by Japan during World War II before declaring independence in 1968. The 21-square-kilometer nation has an estimated population of 10,000.

Tags: [Jerusalem](#), [Micronesia](#), [Nauru](#)

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Briefs

Yad Vashem will put on display this week original blueprints of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi death camps. The exhibition includes four of the colored sketches showing detailed aerial views of the camp and blueprints of its bunks and one of its crematoriums.