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“Chomsky blasts Obama, accepts Sydney peace prize”

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SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) – American political activist Noam Chomsky blasted President Obama on a trip to Australia to receive a peace prize.

Chomsky made his comments concerning Israeli settlement policy in Sydney on Wednesday as he received this year’s \$50,000 Sydney Peace Prize for his “unfailing moral courage.”

“It’s been obvious from the very beginning: He [Obama] makes some nice words about not expanding the settlements, but then he proceeds to assist in settlement expansion,” Chomsky told SBS TV.

Past Sydney Peace Prize recipients include Palestinian activist Hanan Ashrawi, South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Irene Khan, a former secretary general of Amnesty International.

The prize, which is awarded by the Sydney Peace Foundation based at the University of Sydney, was blasted by Jewish academic Philip Mendes.

“It is hard to see how Chomsky’s track record on Israel-Palestine justifies his receipt of a peace prize,” Mendes wrote Tuesday in The Australian newspaper. “He has done nothing to encourage conflict resolution based on mutual compromise and concessions, or to advance practical strategies that would empower peace activists and moderates on both sides of the equation. To the contrary, he is a one-sided advocate for the Palestinian national cause.”