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## GRAPEVINE

• By GREER FAY CASHMAN

■ WHEN PRESIDENT Shimon Peres paid a state visit to Brazil in November 2009, he received a very cordial

welcome from President **Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva**. At the time, Peres lauded Brazil for its contribution to the Middle East peace process in its role as a mediator.

Very soon afterwards, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas also paid an official visit to Brazil. President Lula, as he is often called, came to Israel on a state visit in 2010 and was warmly received by Peres. Yet even then, recalls former Chief of State Protocol **Yitzhak Eldan**, Lula, who took up the role of president for the third time in January 2023 after having served a prison term, was not particularly well disposed towards Israel. It is customary for visiting heads of state or government to place a wreath at the tomb of Zionist visionary Theodor Herzl. Very few dignitaries refuse to do so; Lula was one of those who did. In the interim, he has taken a pro-Palestinian stance on many occasions. Eldan was not surprised when Lula compared Israeli attacks on Gaza, in the quest to eliminate Hamas, to the atrocities of the Nazis. It was yet another example of where Lula stands in terms of foreign policy.

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BRAZIL'S PRESIDENT Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva gives a speech during his visit to the Arab League headquarters in Cairo earlier this month.

(Mohamed Abdel-Ghany/Reuters)