



A Two-State Solution: The Path Towards Peace

Israel is one of the United States' most important allies and strategic partners. After centuries in diaspora, Israel now serves as a sanctuary to the Jewish people who have been and are still very much an oppressed minority group. As a Progressive, this is something I am proud to support and want to help maintain. A key part of that is upholding Israel's legitimate right to exist in peace and security. Strengthening the relationship between our two countries has long been a priority for both Democrats and Republicans. As a member of Congress, I hope to visit Israel and will play my part in promoting US leadership in bringing peace to a region that so desperately needs and deserves it.

Israeli Security and Foreign Aid

On Israel's western border sits Gaza, which is governed by Hamas, a political movement that seeks the destruction of Israel. This posture towards Israel is well documented, contained within the Hamas Charter that outlines the movement's goals, and has been explicated on by its party leaders and government officials over the years. The Palestinian Authority (PA) has a "martyrs fund" that it uses, in part, to make monthly cash stipends to the families of Palestinians killed, injured, or imprisoned while carrying out violence against Israel. These monthly payments are on average twice as high as the average salary in the West Bank and three times as high in Gaza. It's not hard to see how this serves as a recruitment tool for everyday Palestinians who live in poverty to encourage them to join the ranks of Hamas and enact violence against Israel.

All of that is said to underline the importance of US security assistance to Israel. They are under great threat and it is important that we help to make sure they maintain a qualitative military edge, so that they can properly defend themselves. The funding we give Israel for the Iron Dome plays a critical role in that effort and helps to keep Israeli civilians safe from rocket attacks. It is one of the most important parts of the foreign aid that we contribute to.

The threat to Israel from them is far too grave to condition the aid already agreed upon in the MOU. Doing so would undermine Israel's ability to defend itself against the very serious threats it faces.

Providing this security assistance is important in and of itself and the merits of it can stand alone, but it does more than just help Israel defend itself and maintain a qualitative military edge - it is a strategic investment to regional stability and an effective way for us to pursue foreign policy goals in the Middle East without needing American troops on the ground.

Palestinian Rights

Our commitment to Israeli security must run parallel to our commitment to ensuring the dignity and humanity of the Palestinian people. While I advocate strongly for continued aid to Israel, I will do the same for robust US assistance that benefits the Palestinian people and is in compliance with Taylor Force Act. I also strongly support President Biden's efforts to reinstate aid to the UN agencies that serve Palestinians. It's critically important that we work with the UN to make sure proper safeguards are in place to ensure humanitarian assistance and aid is going toward its intended use. This aid serves an essential role in meeting Palestinian humanitarian needs, preventing and reducing violence, and promoting greater stability between them and Israel.

Additionally, this aid serves an important role because of the disastrous conditions in Gaza and to a lesser extent the West Bank. Unemployment is staggeringly high, there is serious food and water insecurity, schools are deeply underserved, and there are grave electricity shortages. The poverty and suffering there is startling, tragic, and we must take strong action to help people there who are in great need. Palestinians are entitled to basic human rights and dignity.

A Negotiated Two-State Solution

The United States has an important responsibility to help broker a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians, so that they can both exist in peace and live a life free from the threat of violence. An agreement of that nature would safeguard Israel as a Jewish homeland, create a state for Palestinians to realize their right to self-determination, and provide agreement on the shared status of Jerusalem.

To achieve that on the Palestinian side, it means the basic recognition that Israel has a right to exist; an end to all terrorism, an end to their Martyrs Fund, and an end to the anti-Semitic rhetoric and positions of Hamas and Palestinian political leadership. Israel too has steps it needs to take toward peace, including an end to the annexation of land in the West Bank, no further settlement expansion and no more evictions or demolitions of homes. This will put both sides in a stronger position to achieve peace.

As the world's only superpower and one of the strongest allies to Israel, the United States has an important and influential role to play in brokering that peace.

And there is precedent for this:

- In 2005, we helped broker Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement.
- In 1998, the Good Friday Agreement brought together Northern Ireland's Protestant majority and Catholic minority.
- In 1995, the Dayton Accords were signed in Dayton, Ohio, which brought an end to the conflict in Bosnia.

While all of these conflicts are different from one another and are certainly different than the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and the Middle East overall, still, we must carry on the tradition of strong US leadership in brokering peace to help end the suffering that everyday

Palestinans and Israelis experience due to this conflict. They deserve to live a life free from the threat of violence, where they can thrive, and can pursue their greatest dreams.

As a pro-Israel, pro-Palestinian member of Congress, I will do everything in my power to make sure the United States steps up to serve in this critical role. It's important to note that peace can only be achieved through bilateral talks between the two parties negotiating in good faith with the goal of long-lasting, sustained peace.

It's essential that we think about how we can take steps to get the region closer to peace and closer to a negotiated two-state solution. Initiatives like the Nita M. Lowey Middle East Partnership for Peace Act that promote economic cooperation, people-to-people peacebuilding programs, and advance shared community building, peaceful coexistence, dialogue and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians - can be apart of that.

Israel Relations Normalizations Act and the Abraham Accords

A diplomacy-first approach to the Middle East region as a whole can help to quell tension and be a part of facilitating peace, this includes more countries normalizing relations with Israel. I believe that the Israel Relations Normalizations Act is an important effort of US leadership to help broker peace, which passed last March, and is a call to "develop and implement a regional strategy to encourage economic cooperation among Israel, Arab states and the Palestinians to enhance the prospects for regional peace, respect for human rights, transparent governance, and cooperation." This would build off the Abraham Accords, make them stronger, and move the region closer to achieving peace over time. While the normalization of relations between Israel and many Arab nations is a great breakthrough for the region and Israel, we should be clear eyed in our understanding that a truly comprehensive peace between Israel, Palestinians, and other countries in the Arab world can only be achieved by resolving the core issues at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and ultimately leads to the creation of an independent Palestinian state that exists alongside Israel.

Iran

The United States must do everything in its power to stop Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, which would pose an existential threat to Israel and make the Middle East and the world a much more unsafe place. Repeated threats by Iran to "wipe Israel off the map" underscore how important this is to Israel's security. If Iran were to get its hands on a nuclear weapon, it could set off a nuclear arms race in the Middle East and incentivize other countries like Saudi Arabia and Turkey to achieve these sorts of capabilities themselves.

The original Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), certainly fell short in ways, but it blocked Iran's ability to build a nuclear weapon, which was an important success. Trump should have never abandoned the deal because it made Israel and the world less safe, it undermined peace and security in the region, and was widely condemned internationally. I strongly support restoring the JCPOA, but like President Biden, at this point I agree that we must make it longer,

stronger, and broader to cover not just the issue of nuclear weapons, but also the full range of destabilizing and threatening actions Iran engages in, like Iran's ballistic missile program and the country's support for terrorist proxies like Hezbollah and Hamas.

Combatting Antisemitism

There is a scourge of antisemitism and there's been a spike of hate crimes across our country, throughout the world, and even here in Orlando, where recently Nazis paraded down our streets, demonstrated, and spread hate.

While the recent events in Orlando have been a stark reminder that antisemitism is alive and well, we also must remind ourselves of the white supremacists and neo-nazis who lit tiki torches in Charlottesville and marched through the streets chanting "Jews will not replace us", and the shootings at Jewish places of worship that happen far too regularly. We must stand with our Jewish brothers, sisters, and siblings, and fight back against this hate and work toward a truly inclusive society.

Boycott, Sanctions, and Divestment (BDS)

Additionally, I believe that the Boycott, Sanctions, and Divestment (BDS) movement is extremely problematic and undermines the chances of peace and a two-state solution. Additionally, It hurts both Palestinians and Israelis who suffer economically from it. Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine have been designated by the United States as terrorist organizations and all these groups are a part of the Central BDS movement's council, which in my eye delegitimizes the entire organization and movement. It does not seek a future that includes both Israel and Palestinians together, which is automatically disqualifying and it is counterproductive to peacefully resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.