

Ten Principles on the Israel-Hamas War and the Path to Peace

Adopted unanimously March 2024 by the AJC Executive Council

As the October 7 Hamas massacre and Israel's military response continue to convulse the region and shape perceptions and debates about Israel, U.S. policy and presence in the Middle East, and the prospect of advancing Israeli-Palestinian and wider Arab-Israeli peace, the American Jewish Committee sets forth the following encapsulation of our principles on the Israel-Hamas war and the necessary steps to achieve a more stable future for all the peoples of the region:

- **Israel has the right and obligation – as does any state – to defend its territorial integrity and the lives of its residents against any and all aggressors.** AJC stands with Israel, mourns the victims of the October 7 terrorist attack, grieves for the wounded and displaced, honors the memory of those who have fallen in Israel's defense, and is united with all Israel in demanding the immediate release of hostages. Israel's response to the mass murder, atrocities, rapes, and kidnappings by Iran-backed Hamas and other terrorists on October 7, and to continuous rocket fire from Gaza, adheres to international law to an extent with little precedent in modern warfare. AJC expresses its sorrow over the loss of innocent Palestinian life in this war, denounces Hamas leaders' exploitation of civilians as human shields, and calls on the international community to join Israel in substantially increasing the provision of needed humanitarian aid to the civilian population of Gaza.
- **A premature permanent ceasefire that leaves Hamas in power will, as Hamas leaders have vowed, set the stage for continued terror attacks and doom the prospect of Israeli-Palestinian peace.** A sustainable end to hostilities in Gaza can only be assured once Hamas – which has spent billions of dollars since seizing power in 2007 on military infrastructure rather than on the welfare of the enclave's population – frees all the hostages and ceases to pose a threat to the Israeli people and territory, has no governing authority in Gaza, and is incapable of blocking the prospect of Israeli-Palestinian peace.
- **AJC recognizes the unique role of the United States – Israel's irreplaceable strategic partner and democratic ally – in supporting Israel materially and politically** in meeting shared objectives in Gaza: the end of Hamas rule, vanquishing the persistent terrorist threat to Israel, and the liberation of hostages. We applauded the Biden administration's immediate, vital support for Israel after October 7, urge its continuation, and are grateful for the strong bipartisan congressional commitment to Israel's self-defense.
- **Continued Iranian impunity – as the regime sets fires across the region, advances toward military nuclear capability, kidnaps foreigners and holds them for ransom, and egregiously oppresses its own citizens – is intolerable.** AJC urges the United States and coalition partners to intensify their retaliatory actions against Iran and its proxies, including the Houthis and related militias, for hostile acts that have taken the lives of American soldiers, among others, and could widen the current conflict. Universal designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Hezbollah as terrorist entities; insistence on International Atomic Energy Agency access to, and monitoring of, declared and suspected nuclear sites; and full enforcement of oil, missile, and arms transfer sanctions, should be the beginning but not the end of concerted allied steps to deter and punish Iranian violations of international law. AJC stands with Israel not only in its just war against Hamas but also in the defense of its northern border against attacks by the Iran-backed Hezbollah, its deterrence of threats posed by other Iranian proxies, and its efforts to thwart terror and other acts of violence in the West Bank.
- **As presently constituted, the Palestinian Authority – chronically corrupt and in thrall to extremist forces, even as it has undertaken limited security cooperation with Israel in the West Bank – cannot be vested with responsibility to govern Gaza.** Nevertheless, civil administration in Gaza must ultimately be significantly, if not exclusively, in Palestinian hands – wielded by a thoroughly reformed PA or a new configuration in which Palestinian administrators work in tandem with American, Arab, and multinational partners. Similarly, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, an entity seemingly conceived to perpetuate rather than resolve the status of 1948 Palestinian refugees and which is compromised as a

distributor of aid by its extensive association with terrorists – including the documented participation by staff members in the October 7 massacre and the use of its facilities as weapons depots – must be independently investigated and, without interfering in the vital task of providing assistance to Palestinians in need, ultimately replaced. AJC urges creation of a new framework for UN aid to the Palestinians, with a mandate, like that of other refugee programs, to facilitate the integration of the subject population in the lands in which they have settled.

- **AJC respects, and concurs with, the consensus of the vast majority of Israeli citizens that the re-establishment of Israeli settlements or of permanent military installations in Gaza, or a program of displacing Palestinians from Gaza or the West Bank, would be contrary to long-established Israeli policy.** Although it will be necessary, after the fulfillment of its military objectives and for the immediate future, for Israel to maintain primary responsibility for security in Gaza – to prevent the resurgence of Hamas and counter other terrorist threats – that role should be the extent of Israel’s presence in the enclave.
- **The land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, indigenous to both Jews and Arabs, cannot be the exclusive domain of one people, but must be shared,** as the UN General Assembly resolved in partitioning Mandatory Palestine on November 29, 1947. Alongside the thriving, democratic, and pluralistic state of Israel – the Jewish homeland, with citizens of many faiths and an integrated Arab minority – an autonomous, nonmilitarized, significantly contiguous political entity must ultimately be created to afford national rights to the Palestinian population. Pursuing separation – the path to Palestinian statehood – will avert the emergence of an unequal one-state reality, preserving Israel’s democratic values and predominantly Jewish identity. The path to statehood must be clearly defined, with international recognition following – not preceding – the achievement of milestones agreed upon by the two parties, including the abandonment of educational curricula and civic practices that delegitimize the other, or payment structures that reward and incentivize “martyrdom”; the demonstration of effective governance in the West Bank and Gaza; steps to establish a functioning, self-sustaining Palestinian economy; and provisions to assure freedom of operation of Israeli security forces as needed. There can be no Palestinian state unless and until the Palestinian narrative acknowledges that the modern Jewish state of Israel is here to stay.
- **AJC encourages the United States, with its unrivaled leadership and influence, and in close partnership with Israel and allied states, to lay the groundwork for the “day after,” reflective of Israel’s justified security concerns.** We recognize that a definitive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the current highly charged context – with the wounds of October 7 in Israel not close to healed, hostages still held, hostilities on multiple fronts, and the massive devastation and loss of Palestinian life in Gaza – may be impossible. Yet, with pragmatism and patience, we continue to imagine, and strive for, a more hopeful future, in which Israelis’ security requirements and Palestinians’ political aspirations can be fulfilled.
- **Navigating the challenging path to a more stable reality in a rebuilt, deradicalized Gaza, and a constructive separation between Israelis and Palestinians, will require regional support,** in which Arab states that engage Israel – the immediate neighbors Egypt and Jordan, and those with newer relations through the Abraham Accords and other constructs – will have a necessary facilitating role. The recent dramatic steps toward Israel’s regional integration, advancing an agenda to which AJC has long been committed, offer evidence that old mindsets can change, inherited hatreds dissolve; the UAE’s Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence and its Abrahamic Family House, introduction of Holocaust education in Morocco and Bahrain, and recent reforms of Saudi school curricula offer further evidence. In that regard, we encourage and support continued expansion of the Abraham Accords circle of Arab-Israeli peace.
- **Since Israel’s founding, AJC has been a steadfast ally and supporter of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people. We condemn those who deny or disregard Israel’s legitimacy and seek to hold Israel’s behavior to a standard applied to no other nation.** Although granted no lasting respite from war and terror throughout its 75-plus-year history, Israel has been a beacon of democracy and progress, a contributor to regional security and prosperity, and an inspiration and source of pride for Jews and other admirers worldwide. **Am Yisrael Chai!**