



# 117<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS

*Briefing Book*





## *A Message from J Street President Jeremy Ben-Ami*

Congratulations on your election to serve as a member of the 117th Congress.

With so many important issues on your plate and so much work to be done to represent your constituents at a time of an unprecedented public health disaster and economic crisis, we know that delving into the intricacies of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Middle East diplomacy may not be the most pressing of matters. But as you navigate these complex issues and formulate your approach to difficult questions, we hope you will consider J Street as a nuanced and helpful source of information, insight and analysis.

As the political home for pro-Israel, pro-peace Americans, we pride ourselves on openly and honestly evaluating the challenges facing the US, Israel and the Middle East today. We advocate for pragmatic, principled policies that advance peace and security while living up to our shared democratic ideals, both at home and abroad. We give voice to the views, concerns and values of the majority of American Jews.

We hope you find this guide to be a useful resource, and encourage you to reach out to us at any time if we may be of assistance to you and your staff. J Street is very much looking forward to continuing to build a relationship with you and your team throughout this Congress and in the years ahead.



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# J STREET *Background*

## *Mission*

**J Street organizes pro-Israel, pro-peace Americans to promote US policies that embody our deeply held Jewish and democratic values and that help secure the State of Israel as a democratic homeland for the Jewish people. We believe that only a negotiated resolution agreed to by Israelis and Palestinians can meet the legitimate needs and national aspirations of both peoples.**

**Working in the American political system, in the Jewish community and with others with whom we share core values, we advocate for diplomacy-first American leadership and policies that advance justice, equality, peace, and democracy in Israel, in the wider region and in the United States as well.**

## PRINCIPLES

### **1. We are committed to and support the people and the state of Israel.**

We believe that the Jewish people have the right to a national home of their own, and that millennia of history demonstrate the need for such a home. We celebrate its re-birth after thousands of years.

We value and share the democratic principles on which Israel was founded and that have guided the country for seven decades — even as we acknowledge the threats to that democracy from without and within.

We recognize that Israel faces dangerous enemies, and support its right to defend itself against them. We support Israel's right to live in security and peace, within internationally recognized boundaries.

### **2. The future of both Israelis and Palestinians depends on achieving a two-state solution to their conflict and an end to the ongoing occupation.**

We believe the Palestinian people, like the Jewish people, have the right to a democratic national home of their own, living side-by-side with Israel in peace, freedom and security. They deserve full civil rights and an end to the systemic injustice of occupation.

We support the creation of an independent, de-militarized state of Palestine with defined borders. We believe a two-state solution to the conflict serves both Israel's and America's interests and fulfills the legitimate national aspirations of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples to self-determination and sovereignty. We believe that both the Palestinian and Israeli leadership should be clear and consistent in putting forward concrete, serious proposals for how to achieve such an agreement, and should demonstrate a willingness to make meaningful compromises in order to do so. We urge both the US government and the international community to take urgent steps to help bring the parties together and to lay the groundwork for meaningful negotiations leading to a lasting resolution of the conflict.

For too long, pro-Israel advocacy has defined this conflict in zero-sum terms, as “us versus them,” a conflict in which there can be only one winner. In fact, Israel’s long-term security and survival as a democratic homeland for the Jewish people depends on bringing an end to the occupation and fulfilling the aspirations of the Palestinian people to achieve self-determination via a two-state solution.

Israel faces a stark choice. It cannot remain both a democratic state and a Jewish homeland while maintaining control over all the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. It can only have two of these three — it can only remain a democratic homeland for the Jewish people by giving up the vast majority of occupied territory on which a Palestinian state can be built in exchange for peace.

### **3. Israel’s American supporters have the right and the responsibility to speak out when policies or actions of the Israeli government harm the long-term interests of the United States, Israel and the Jewish people.**

We can and must distinguish between criticizing the policies of the government of Israel and questioning Israel’s fundamental right to exist as a Jewish homeland.

Criticism of Israeli policy does not threaten the health of the state of Israel — in fact, such criticism and open debate is a key element of any democratic society. Meanwhile, certain Israeli policies (and the silence of too many in the American Jewish establishment when vigorous protest of those policies is necessary) do pose an existential threat to Israel’s future. They deserve to be challenged and opposed by Israel’s supporters — just as we should challenge harmful Palestinian actions and policies that exacerbate conflict or make peace harder to achieve.

Endless settlement expansion, creeping annexation, and the enforcement of occupation violate international law, trample on Palestinian rights and push Israel further down a path of permanent conflict, illiberal democracy and injustice. They work to prevent the creation of an independent Palestinian state and undermine the prospects for a viable two-state solution.

As Americans, we have the right and responsibility to speak up and shape our country’s foreign policy towards Israel and the wider region, and to promote strong, multilateral diplomacy to resolve conflicts with the use of military force considered only as a last resort. We cannot support policies that violate the values at the heart of both our Jewish and American heritage. We must oppose policies — whether American, Palestinian or Israeli — that make peace more difficult, exacerbate conflict or infringe on basic human rights.

### **4. Vibrant but respectful debate about Israel benefits the American Jewish community and Israel.**

Strong and vibrant debate has characterized the Jewish tradition for millennia. As an organization that is primarily but not exclusively Jewish, we believe it is vital to engage with those with whom we disagree.

We must not allow a small minority to impose constraints on what constitutes acceptable speech in the Jewish community or in American politics. Closing the doors of the Jewish community or American government to those who question US or Israeli policy inhibits the productive open debate that leads to sound policymaking, and puts the intellectual integrity and future of our community at risk.

We believe vigorous debate about Israel and American policy will not only engage younger American Jews across the political spectrum, but will increase participation in the broader Jewish community among all generations.

### **5. Our work is grounded in the Jewish and democratic values on which we were raised.**

These values are central to who we are as a people: the principle that you should treat others the way that you would want to be treated yourself, basic notions of justice and freedom, the pursuit of peace, and tikkun olam — seeking to make the world a better place.

We believe that we must work for an Israel, a United States and a Jewish community that lives up to the best of these values and traditions. It is in the spirit of these values that we fight against bigotry, inequality and injustice and work in multi-faith, multi-racial coalitions with communities in their efforts to overcome such oppression and to strengthen liberal democracy.

# KEY Terms



## GREEN LINE

Named for the green marker used to draw the armistice lines in 1949, the “Green Line” marks the territory recognized internationally as the sovereign State of Israel. At the conclusion of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the Green Line separated Israel from the remaining parts of mandatory Palestine: the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), controlled by Jordan, and the Egyptian-controlled Gaza Strip. As a result of the 1967 war, Israel conquered and occupied these additional territories. A broad consensus of the international community recognizes the Green Line as the essential basis and starting point for negotiations of a border between Israel and a future Palestinian state.

The United States, European Union and Arab League support negotiations for a two-state solution based on the Green Line with mutually agreed-upon land swaps. The Palestinian leadership has repeatedly recognized and continues to recognize Israel’s right to exist within the Green Line, and has sought in negotiations to limit additional land concessions to Israel. Previous Israeli governments have shown a willingness to negotiate based on the Green Line, but coalitions led by Prime Minister Netanyahu have rejected it as a reference for negotiations.

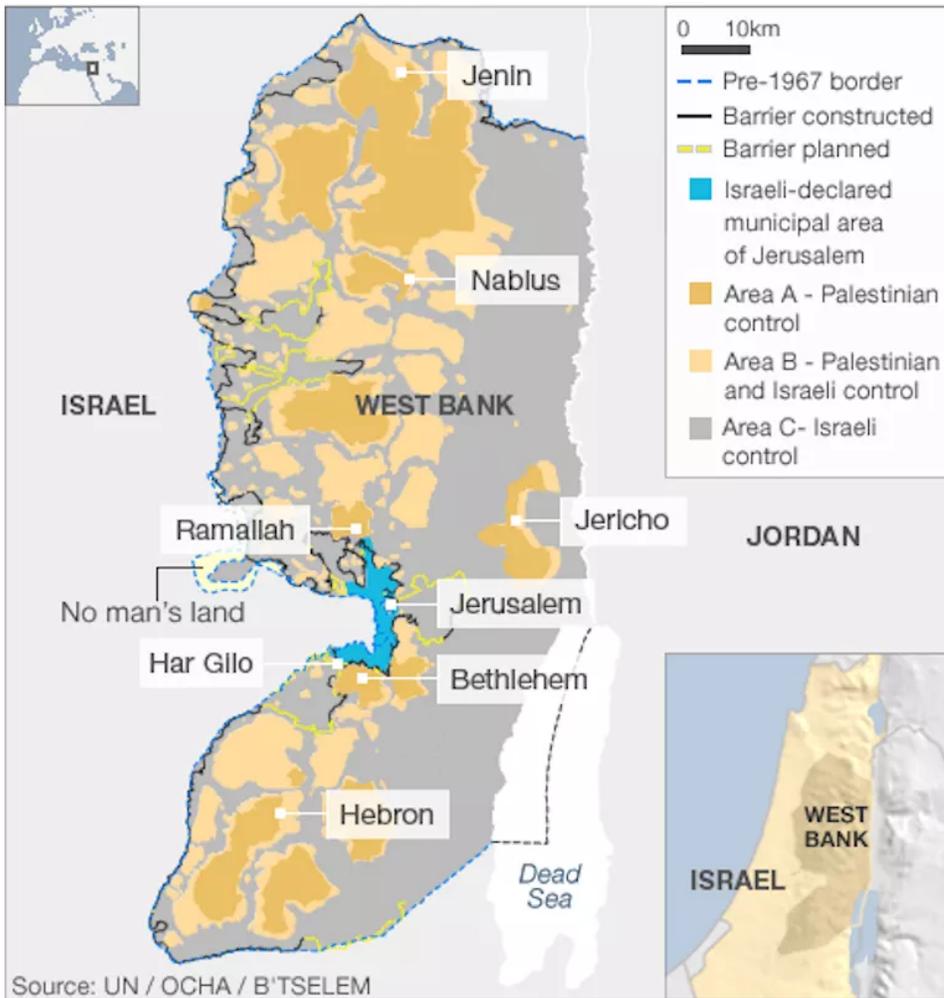
J Street is deeply concerned that the pre-1967 Green Line distinguishing between Israel and the occupied territory is being effectively erased both on the ground and in the consciousness of Israelis, Jews and others around the world. The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will require establishing a border through negotiations between Israel and the new state of Palestine — based on the pre-1967 Green Line with adjustments. Until that border is negotiated, the Green Line remains the internationally recognized demarcation between the State of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.



## SETTLEMENTS

Settlements are communities of Jews established over the Green Line. Settlements can range in size from one to two mobile homes on a hilltop to large suburban-style communities. Until the Trump administration, every US administration since 1967 has opposed Israeli settlement activity, and recent administrations — both Democratic and Republican — have identified continued settlement construction as an obstacle to a two-state solution. It has also been the official US government position that the settlements are illegal under international law — specifically the Fourth Geneva Convention’s prohibition on resettlement of a country’s civilians into occupied territory — until Secretary of State Pompeo declared in 2019 that the US would no longer consider settlements illegal. While all settlements are illegal under international law, some are also illegal under Israeli law, established as outposts by Israeli settlers without government authorization.

## Control of the West Bank Under Oslo Accords



## WEST BANK

The “West Bank” is the territory west of the Jordan River and east of the Green Line. Together with the Gaza Strip, it is referred to as the “Occupied Palestinian Territories” by the UN. The settler movement refers to the West Bank by its biblical name of “Judea and Samaria.”

In 1995, the second Oslo Accord delineated the West Bank into Areas A, B and C, with the intention of establishing an interim Palestinian governing body and a gradual withdrawal of Israeli troops. Areas A, B and C are distinguished by their different administrative statuses.

Based on the Palestinian population of specific areas and the security priorities of the Israeli military, lands designated as a particular area are not contiguous and instead are interspersed throughout the West Bank. Area A makes up 18% of the land in the West Bank and encompasses the major Palestinian population centers. Under the second Oslo Accord, Israel withdrew troops from Area A, leaving the Palestinian Authority (PA) responsible for both the civil administration and policing of the area.

Lands designated as Area B surrounding parts of area A and make up 22% of the West Bank. The PA is responsible for the civil administration of Area B, and the Israeli army is responsible for the security.

Area C is 60% of the land and is largely comprised of the more rural areas of the West Bank, including the strategic and fertile Jordan Valley. All Israeli settlements are in Area C. The Palestinian Authority does not operate in Area C; Israel is responsible for both the civil administration and security there.

## PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

The Palestinian Authority (PA) is the administrative entity created through the Oslo Accords for the Palestinian people to administer civil and security matters in limited geographic areas. The PA is not the official body negotiating for the resolution of the conflict. The official representative of the Palestinian people is the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Currently, Mahmoud Abbas is both Chairman of the PLO and President of the PA.

# JEWISH VOTERS'

## *Middle East Policy Views*

### Jewish voters strongly back a two-state solution and US engagement to achieve it:

- **75 percent of Jewish voters would support a two-state agreement that adheres to international consensus parameters**, including a demilitarized Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, borders based on the pre-1967 lines with agreed land swaps, a Palestinian capital in the Arab areas of East Jerusalem, and compensation rather than return to Israel for nearly all Palestinian refugees.
- **91 percent of Jewish voters support the US playing an active role** in helping the parties resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, **80 percent want the US to play that role even if it means publicly disagreeing** with both parties, and **77 percent want the US to play an active role even if it means exerting pressure** on both parties.
- **71 percent of Jewish voters believe the US should be a fair and even-handed broker** between Israelis and Palestinians.

### Jewish voters disagree with Prime Minister Netanyahu and Right-wing Israeli policies:

- **61 percent of Jewish voters have an unfavorable view of Netanyahu**, with 31 percent having a favorable view of the Prime Minister, a net -29 rating and a stark change from 2009 to 2014 when his net favorability ratings ranged from +7 to +31.
- **82 percent of Jewish voters believe construction of Israeli settlements in the West Bank should be suspended or restricted** to certain areas.
- **Only 15 percent of Jewish voters support Israeli annexation of the West Bank** that establishes one state as the national homeland of the Jewish people, and allows Palestinians to vote for their local leaders but not for Israel's government.

74%

support re-entering the Iran nuclear agreement.

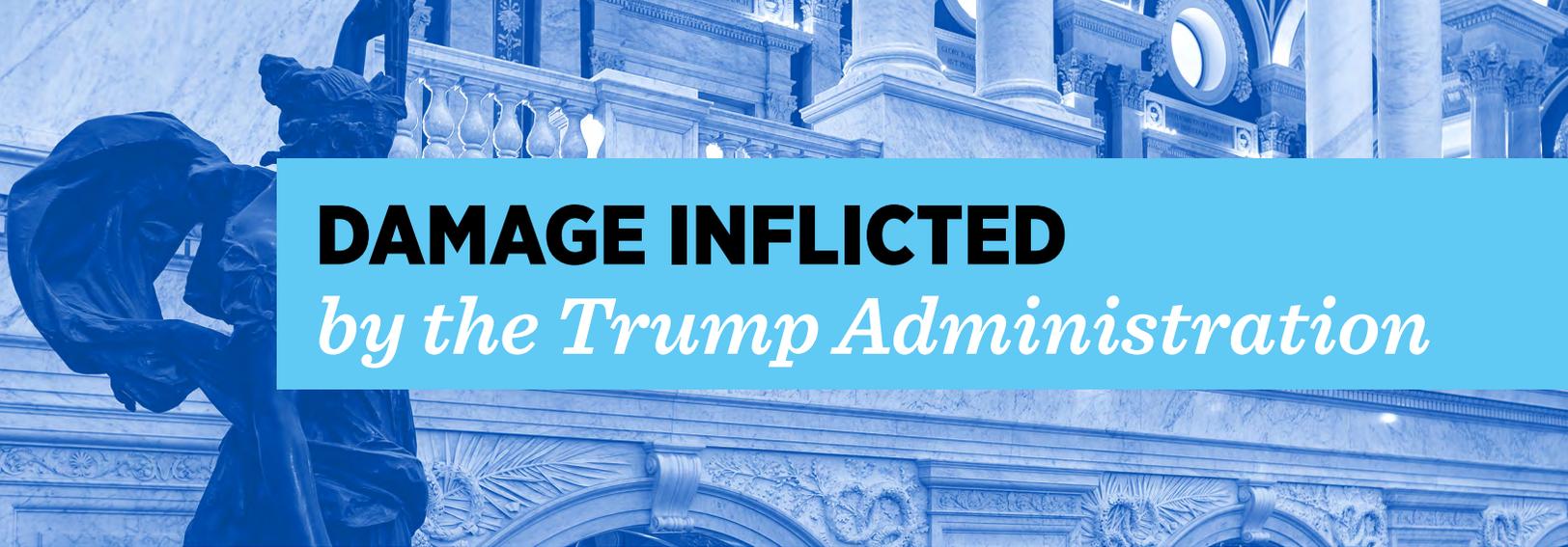
66%

support restoring US aid to the Palestinians.

57%

support restricting US military aid to Israel so that it cannot be spent on annexation.

All data are from a national survey conducted by GBAO October 28 — November 3, 2020, and include interviews with 800 self-identified Jewish voters who cast their ballots on Election Day or prior to Election Day. The survey is subject to a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. To ensure an accurate assessment of the views of the American Jewish electorate, the survey reflects the demographic composition of the Jewish population as extensively examined by the Pew Research Center. Results may differ from various exit polls which are not designed to specifically sample Jewish Americans. All data are available at [www.jstreet.org](http://www.jstreet.org).



# DAMAGE INFLICTED

## *by the Trump Administration*

Over the course of four years, the Trump administration did tremendous harm to the prospects for Israeli-Palestinian peace with a policy that deliberately helped to entrench Israel's deepening occupation of the Palestinian territories. Ultimately, President Biden will need to do more than just undo the damage wrought by his predecessor to revive prospects for a two-state solution. Nonetheless, progress must start by repairing the harm. Members of the 117th Congress and their staffs can help by first taking stock of the ways in which the Trump administration embraced the right-wing agenda of the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, while delegitimizing Palestinians and their goal of self-determination.

**The following is a retrospective of key actions taken by the Trump administration vis-a-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:**

- **David Friedman picked as US ambassador to Israel**, a staunch supporter of settlements and opponent of Palestinian statehood with a history of incendiary statements regarding Palestinians and pro-Israel/pro-peace Jewish Americans;
- **Jerusalem recognized as Israel's capital without any parallel recognition of Palestinian claims to the city as capital of their eventual state**, coupled with relocation to Jerusalem of the US embassy to Israel; Halting provision of congressionally appropriated funding to UNRWA.
- **Humanitarian funding appropriated by Congress to benefit the Palestinian people halted**, including both bilateral aid through the Economic Support Fund and funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA);
- **PLO mission in Washington, DC closed**, terminating the Palestinian diplomatic presence in the US capital that had been established in 1994, following the signing of the Oslo Accords;
- **US Consulate in Jerusalem shuttered**, a highly consequential move that ended the longstanding US practice of maintaining a physically and institutionally separate diplomatic mission to the Palestinians, and instead created a Palestinian Affairs Unit within the US embassy to Israel;
- **The Golan Heights, occupied by Israel from Syria during the 1967 war, recognized as sovereign Israeli territory**, in contravention of international law;
- **The State Department's 1978 legal opinion that Israel's settlements contravene the Fourth Geneva Convention rescinded**, as the Secretary of State expressed his belief that "the establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in the West Bank is not, per se, inconsistent with international law," which became known as the "Pompeo Doctrine";
- **Trump "peace plan" released, endorsing Israeli unilateral annexation** of vast portions of the occupied West Bank;
- **All goods originating in Area C of the occupied West Bank required to be incorrectly labeled "Made in Israel,"** whether produced by Israeli settlers or Palestinians;
- **Funding for human rights organizations that report on human rights abuses against Palestinians living in the occupied territories banned**, if the State Department determines the organization to be participating in the global boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement — State Department said to be targeting human rights groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch that take no position on BDS;
- **Geographic restriction preventing US assistance from supporting projects in the settlements under the auspices of joint US-Israel scientific research cooperation agreements terminated**, enabling US taxpayer dollars to be funneled to settlement enterprises.



# WHAT TO EXPECT *in the 117th Congress*

## PRESERVING THE POSSIBILITY OF A TWO-STATE SOLUTION

The 117th Congress — working in concert with the Biden administration — has a real opportunity to advance vital US, Israeli and Palestinian interests. That starts by undoing the significant damage done by the Trump administration, but also by recognizing that a truly pro-Israel policy agenda means moving beyond policies that inadequately addressed or have even helped deepen the Israeli-Palestinian conflict prior to the the Trump era as well.

### Opposing Both *de jure* and *de facto* Annexation

The Israeli government repeatedly threatened to carry out an official or “*de jure*” annexation of West Bank territory with the express support of the Trump administration. US lawmakers supporting a two-state solution vocally opposed any such move, arguing annexation would obstruct the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, and would institutionalize a system in which stateless Palestinian residents of the West Bank are ruled permanently and undemocratically by Israel.

As a new US Congress and administration take office, there is less of an immediate threat of *de jure* annexation due to recent normalization agreements between Israel and Arab states that temporarily suspended this possibility — though it is impossible to say for how long. In many ways, however, *de jure* annexation would simply formalize decades of creeping *de facto* annexation — including regular settlement expansion, demolitions of Palestinian homes and forced displacement of Palestinian communities — which entrench and deepen the occupation and Israel’s hold over territory integral to a viable Palestinian state.

During the Trump administration, the Israeli government accelerated these activities, with the US government not

only refusing to criticize such moves, but compounding them with new attempts to legitimize *de facto* annexation as a matter of US policy, including reversing decades of bipartisan consensus regarding settlements as legally separate from Israel and inconsistent with international law.

The 117th Congress will likely see efforts by proponents of a two-state solution to push back against *de facto* or “creeping” annexation, as well as attempts by allies of the rightwing settlement movement to validate and further advance *de facto* annexation. Examples of both types of vehicles as they relate to substantive issues in the conflict are discussed immediately below.

### Efforts to Reinforce — or Erase — the Vital Distinction between Israel and the Settlements

Previous Congresses have seen a number of thinly-veiled efforts to blur the distinction between Israel and its West Bank settlements under the guise of supporting our ally or US-Israel cooperation. Particularly pervasive were bills in a range of areas, including international trade and anti-boycott legislation, seeking to grant the same US legal and diplomatic protection currently given to the State of Israel to the settlements via a definition of Israel that included “Israeli-controlled territories.”

The Trump administration aggressively sought to further blur the vital distinction in US law and policy between Israel and the settlements via executive action. For example, it amended a decades-old agreement with Israel by removing longstanding restrictions that had prevented US-Israel joint research projects (under the BSF, BIRD and BARD programs) from including Israeli institutions located in the occupied territory — thus permitting US taxpayer

dollars appropriated for such research to benefit the settlements for the first time.

A few weeks later, the Trump administration announced that the administration was reversing 25-year old customs guidance to require that all products made in Area C — the 60 percent of the occupied West Bank in and around the settlements — be labeled “made in Israel,” indicating the US government viewed all Israeli settlements and outposts, and even all of Area C, as part of the State of Israel.

The 117th Congress may see vehicles to reverse such Trump-era changes and restore — and importantly, further build on — previous bipartisan policies maintaining an official distinction between Israel and the settlements. At the same time, we can also expect legislative proposals seeking to ignore or embrace Trump’s blurring of this critical distinction, for example by expanding relevant joint programs without reference to the changes, resulting in a robust flow of US taxpayer dollars into the settlements.

## Demolitions of West Bank Palestinian Communities

Israel consistently denies building permit requests by Palestinian communities where Palestinian families have lived for decades. While the Israeli government regularly advances plans for building new units within Israeli settlements, myriad Palestinian communities in the West Bank are continually under threat of demolition on the basis of that they do not have the necessary permits or on other dubious grounds. Previous congressional action has helped to prevent some demolitions, and J Street supports proactive congressional engagement in protecting Palestinian communities.

Lawmakers in both the House and the Senate have written letters to previous administrations and the Israeli

## AID TO ISRAEL

Given the critical role it plays in maintaining Israel’s security against serious external threats, lawmakers can be expected to continue to appropriate the full \$3.8 billion in US security assistance pledged to Israel in the Memorandum of Understanding agreed by President Obama. At the same time, there is a growing effort among lawmakers to ensure that US security aid is used only to address to Israel’s genuine defense needs, and not to help to implement or advance *de jure* or *de facto* annexation, including the expansion of settlements, the demolition of Palestinian homes or other moves that deepen the occupation.

government opposing such demolitions as harmful to both the practical and political prospects for a two-state solution. In the last Congress, lawmakers also sent letters to the Trump administration questioning whether US-sourced military equipment had been used in such demolitions in violation of existing US law, the Arms Export Control Act, prohibiting foreign countries from using such materiel for non-defence related purposes (the Trump administration did not respond to those letters). Further calls or legislative proposals for such transparency around — and enforcement of — compliance with US law in this area can be expected in the current Congress.

## Opposing Incitement and Payments to Perpetrators of Terrorism

The 116th Congress rightly opposed and acted against the Palestinian Authority’s practice of paying stipends — under the umbrella of a larger welfare program — to those imprisoned or killed in connection with acts of terrorism against Israelis, or to their families. As the new Congress and US administration takes office, the Palestinian government has indicated that it may take steps to replace its prisoners’ payments program with a responsible welfare program to address concerns of incentivizing violence.

Should the Palesitnian government follow through on meaningful changes to its prisoners payments program, and take further steps to combat incitement against Israel, moves to reassess the current statutory restrictions on the US-Palestinian relationship — including both longstanding and more recent restrictions on bilateral aid and diplomatic relations — would be warranted and expected.

The 116th Congress saw legislative proposals for expressly restricting the use of US aid to Israel and the equipment bought with it to security purposes. Such use restrictions are very different from proposals for security assistance to be “cut” (i.e., ended or reduced outright) or “conditioned” (i.e., withheld until certain conditions are met). Similar proposals can be expected in the 117th Congress, as well as calls for greater transparency and accountability around such aid to bring it more into line with the more stringent accounting and approval measures to which US security aid to other countries is currently subject.

## AID TO PALESTINIANS

Ignoring recent Congressional appropriations laws, the Trump administration ended US funding to the UN Relief & Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) and suspended nearly all bilateral aid to the Palestinians. These cuts significantly hurt the operations of health, infrastructure and anti-radicalization programs in the West Bank and Gaza.

The Biden administration has indicated it will restore this funding, in line with the current appropriations law. Appropriations battles can be expected between those supporting the Trump-era cuts and lawmakers who — mirroring the Israeli security establishment's own consistent back for US aid to the Palestinians — understand that maintaining and expanding such aid is an essential component of enhancing security and quality of life for both Palestinians and Israelis.

## THE GLOBAL BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT AND SANCTIONS (BDS) MOVEMENT

Recent legislation to criminalize or penalize support for boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel has yet to pass Congress due to opposition from lawmakers who recognize it as a counterproductive and wrong-headed strategy for addressing the Global BDS Movement. Like J Street, hundreds of lawmakers that oppose the Global BDS Movement believe that bills penalizing boycott activity would violate the First Amendment and are more likely to assist than counter the boycott movement's growth.

In particular, opponents of such legislation have expressed concern about the impact that bills like the so-called "Israel Anti-Boycott Act" and "Combating BDS Act" have on the centrist and progressive-leaning communities who are the very people the BDS Movement is trying to attract. They see civil rights experts like the ACLU opposing such efforts and defending individuals being punished or denied a livelihood for engaging in protected political activity. This alienates potential allies in the fight against BDS and could potentially even drive them to identify with the movement.

## ANTISEMITISM

Previous Congresses saw attempts to legislatively expand the definition of antisemitism under provisions of the Civil Rights Act related to educational institutions, which would have equated certain criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism as a matter of US law. Lawmakers and advocacy organizations successfully opposed such legislation on the grounds that it would unconstitutionally suppress and penalize on-campus speech critical of Israel.

Meanwhile, the surge in white nationalist and right-wing antisemitism during and in the immediate aftermath of the Trump administration has gone largely unaddressed by legislation. Much needed proposals to counter this rise in deadly antisemitism can be expected in the 117th Congress — as, unfortunately, can attempts to distract from the dire threat it poses by cynically conflating it with objectionable but constitutionally protected speech critical of Israel.

# IRAN

In May of 2018, against the warnings of hundreds of lawmakers, the Trump administration unilaterally abrogated and abandoned the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) that had successfully blocked all Iranian pathways to a nuclear weapon and began a so-called “maximum pressure” campaign involving new sanctions on Iran. In response, Iran resumed some of its most sensitive nuclear activities and now has several times the amount of enriched uranium as it did when the JCPOA was in effect. Emboldened rather than deterred by the Trump administration’s moves, Iranian hardliners in the regime continued or expanded their support for terrorism, ballistic missile program and human rights abuses.

The overwhelming majority of Democratic lawmakers back President Biden’s intention to restore and then build on the JCPOA, understanding that the incoming administration must lift not only those sanctions specified in the text of the 2015 agreement, but also additional “non-nuclear” sanctions that the Trump administration imposed after its 2018 withdrawal in an effort to frustrate any attempt by the following president to re-enter the deal. Pro-diplomacy lawmakers will also need to resist legislative efforts by deal opponents to tie the new administration’s hands with unworkable redlines or other constraints intended to impede a successful return to the agreement.



# **MODERN TIMELINE** *of the Conflict*

**The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has many different narratives**, and, depending on who is telling the history of the conflict, the meaning and causes of different events have varied interpretations. Both Israelis and Palestinians claim the same land as their homeland. Both peoples have experienced trauma, war and violence for decades. Both peoples have a cultural and historic connection to Jerusalem and both demand that the city serve as their nation's capital.

# 1882–1948

**1882–1903**

The first modern wave of (primarily European) Jewish pre-state immigration to Palestine — then under Ottoman control — begins.

**1916–1917**

Hussein-McMahon Correspondence: In a series of letters, the Sharif of Mecca agrees to launch an Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire in exchange for Britain’s promise to recognize Arab independence.

**1917**

Balfour Declaration: British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour pledges British support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”

**1922**



day Israel (with the exception of the Golan) and Jordan. The French receive a Mandate over Syria.

Amidst intense civil unrest, the League of Nations grants Britain a mandate over formerly Ottoman-controlled land known as Palestine, including all of modern-

**1936**

The Peel Commission, appointed by the British Government in 1936 to assess unrest between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, proposes abolishing the British Mandate and creating two states for two peoples.

**1948**

Immediately following the termination of the British Mandate over Palestine on May 14, the state of Israel is established and recognized by both the United States and the Soviet Union. The following day, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan invade Israel, initiating what is known by Israelis as Israel’s War of Independence.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement: Britain and France reach a secret agreement to divide Arab countries into respective influence spheres following the end of World War I, in contradiction to the terms of the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence.

The Allied Forces defeat the Ottoman Empire.

A summer of unrest between Arabs and Jews results in riots, leading to the killing of 133 Jews and 116 Arabs. On one day, August 24, 67 Jews are killed in the Hebron Massacre.

Mass Jewish immigration to Palestine begins following Nazis’ rise to power in Germany. Arab residents of Palestine rise up against the British Mandate.



Following the end of World War II, the United Nations General Assembly passes Resolution 181 — the UN Partition Plan — calling for the the British Mandate to be divided into separate Jewish and Arab states and for Jerusalem to be governed under international authority. The following day, on November 30, war breaks out between Jews and Arabs living under the British mandate.

**1897**

The first Zionist Congress, led by Theodore Herzl, convenes in Basel, Switzerland, calling for a “home for the Jewish people in Palestine secured by public law.”

**1916**

**1918**

**1929**

**1933**

**1947**

# MODERN TIMELINE OF THE CONFLICT

## 1949–1994

**1964**

At its first summit meeting in Cairo in January of 1964, the Arab League initiates the creation of an organization representing the Palestinian people. The Palestinian National Council convenes in May of 1964 in Jerusalem to found the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) with the stated aim of “liberation of Palestine” through armed struggle.

**1967**



The Six-Day War between Israel and Arab neighbors Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon begins. Israel captures massive territory— the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan and the Golan Heights from Syria.

An estimated additional 250,000 Palestinians become refugees following the 1967 War, some for the second time.

The UN Security Council passes Res. 242, calling on Israel to withdraw from the captured territories.

Israel annexes East Jerusalem and several neighboring villages to form “municipal Jerusalem,” in what Israelis typically view as the “reunification” of the city.

The first Israeli settlement in the West Bank, Kfar Etzion, is founded.

**1969**

The leader of Fatah, Yasser Arafat, becomes the first Chairman of the PLO Executive Committee.

**1973**

Egyptian and Syrian forces launch a coordinated surprise attack against Israel on Yom Kippur and lead an Arab coalition in battle against Israel. After suffering heavy casualties, Israel ultimately succeeds in turning back the opposing armies and expands its territorial gains before the UN secures a ceasefire.

In July, Israel and the invading Arab countries reach armistice agreements, leading to the creation of the Green Line (see glossary). Mandatory Palestine is divided between the state of Israel, Jordan and the All-Palestine Government in Gaza (under Egyptian control). Jerusalem is divided, with the western and eastern portions falling under respective Israeli and Jordanian control.

711,000 Palestinian Arabs become displaced refugees and hundreds of Palestinian villages are destroyed in what Palestinians refer to as the “Nakba” (“catastrophe”). Today, the UN agency for Palestinian Refugees, UNRWA, recognizes these Palestinians and their descendents—over 1.5 million individuals—as refugees. They live in 58 refugee camps spread across Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Gaza and the West Bank.

While most of the Arab citizens who remained within Israel are granted citizenship, they are placed under military law and subjected to curfews, travel restrictions, administrative detention and expulsions. They remain under military law until 1966.



**1949**

**1968**

Led by Rabbi Moshe Levinger, the “Movement for Greater Israel” begins with the establishment of a Jewish community in the Palestinian city of Hebron—an illegal act under Israeli law.

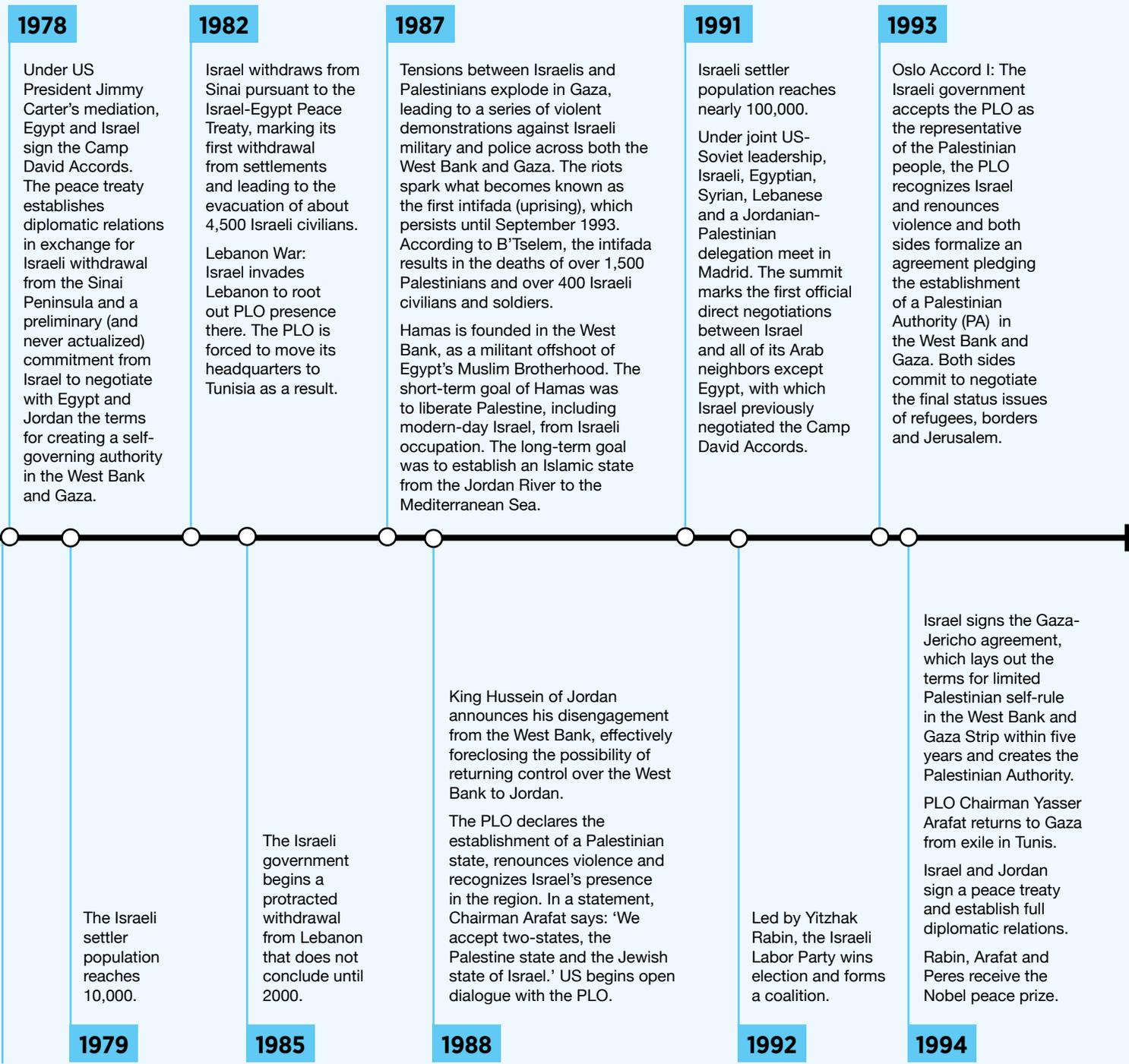
**1970**

Jordan’s King Hussein launches a brutal offensive to expel the PLO from its base in Jordan—a period known by Palestinians as “Black September.” After suffering heavy casualties, the PLO relocates to Lebanon.

**1977**

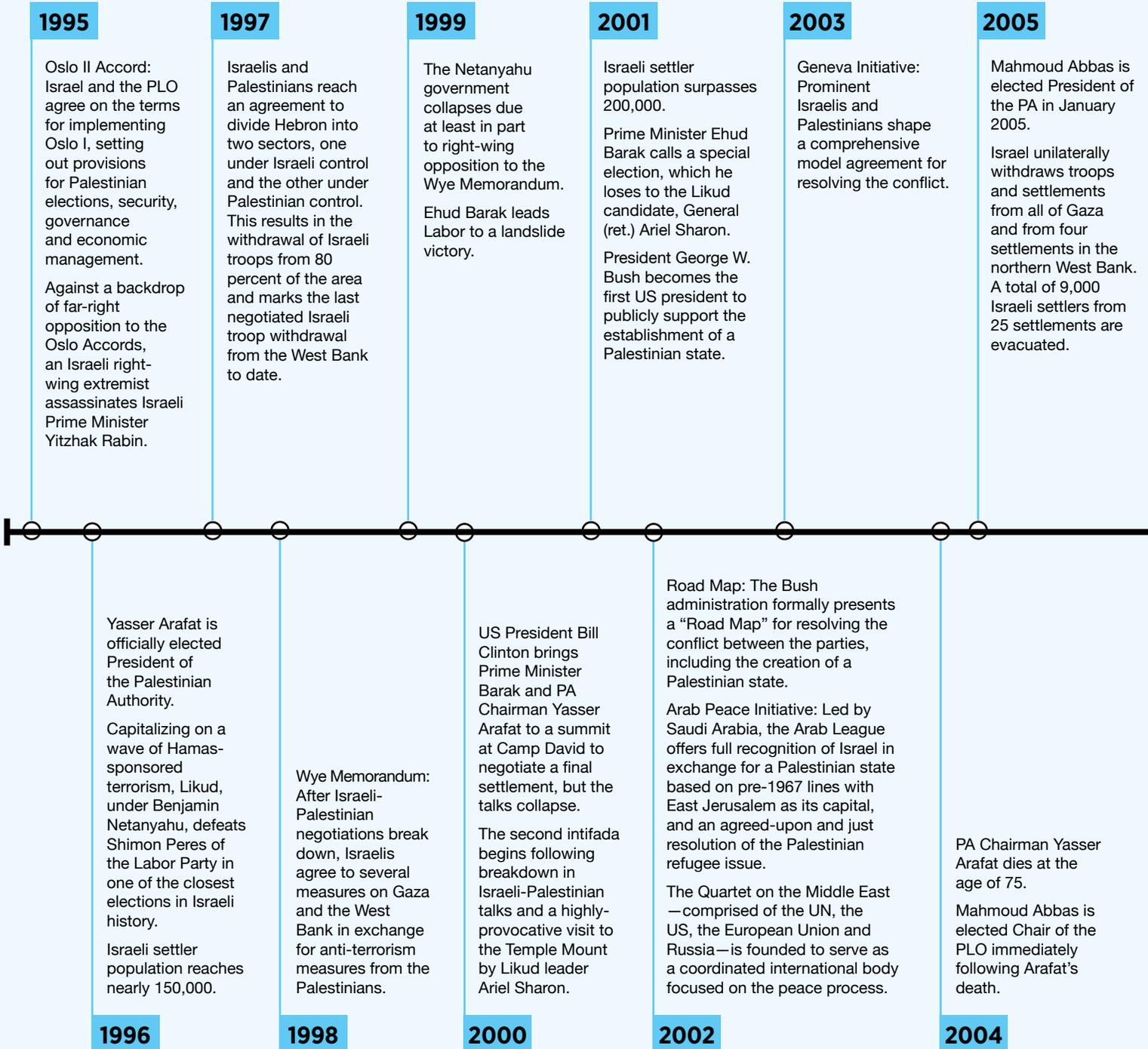
After 29 years of uninterrupted Labor Party governments, conservative opposition party Likud wins a legislative majority for the first time, resulting in Menachem Begin’s election as prime minister.

The number of Israelis living in West Bank settlements reaches 4,400.



# MODERN TIMELINE OF THE CONFLICT

## 1995–2020



## 2006

Hamas wins legislative elections, sparking an immediate crisis with Fatah.

Israeli Prime Minister Sharon suffers a stroke and his powers are transferred to Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, whose party, Kadima, wins the March 2006 elections.

A second war in Lebanon breaks out over the kidnapping and killing of several IDF soldiers by Hezbollah fighters. Israeli troops, Lebanese civilians and Hezbollah militants suffer large-scale casualties. Israel fails to fundamentally alter Hezbollah's position in Lebanon and agrees to withdraw roughly two months after launching the war.

## 2008–2009

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert offers a two-state proposal to President Abbas. Shortly afterward, with PA officials still grappling with the proposal, Olmert is indicted on corruption charges and steps down.

Gaza War/Operation Cast Lead: Citing persistent rocket attacks targeting southern Israel, Israel launches a sustained round of strikes against Hamas in Gaza, ultimately agreeing to a UN Security Council-backed ceasefire.

Benjamin Netanyahu returns to power, forming a minority government with smaller conservative parties and ushering in a period of sustained conservative rule in Israel.

## 2012

Gaza War/Operation Pillar of Defense: In response to continued rocket and mortar fire targeting the Israeli south, Israel launches a second major round of strikes against Hamas in Gaza.

UN votes to accept Palestine as a non-member observer state.

## 2014

2014 Gaza War/Operation Protective Edge: Israel launches a third major round of strikes against Hamas in Gaza in response to rocket fire on southern Israel.

## 2017

Israeli settler population surpasses 400,000, with 130 settlements and 101 illegal outposts.

## 2019

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo overturns decades of bipartisan US foreign policy by declaring that the United States would no longer regard settlements as inconsistent with international law.

Tensions between Hamas and Fatah erupt into a military conflict, with Hamas ultimately seizing power in Gaza. Israel and Egypt impose a blockade on Gaza. Fatah and the Palestinian Authority maintain control over only the West Bank, and Hamas assumes control in Gaza—a situation that has persisted since.

Annapolis Peace Conference: The Bush administration attempts to revive the peace process around its “Road Map” in a summit in Annapolis, Maryland.

## 2007

Israeli settler population surpasses 300,000.

## 2010

Secretary of State John Kerry attempts to revive the peace process through a round of peace talks that falter less than a year later.

## 2013

Secretary of State John Kerry outlines principles for a peace plan to codify the point to which negotiations progressed during his 2013–2014 peace initiative.

The Obama administration abstains on United Nations Resolution 2334, demanding an end to Israeli settlements, allowing the motion to pass.

## 2016

President Trump recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and moves the US Embassy to Jerusalem, taking a final status issue off the table.

## 2018

Trump administration releases “Peace Vision.” Endorsing Israeli control over East Jerusalem and the annexation of broad swaths of the Jordan Valley and Area C, the plan proposes an archipelago-type configuration for a future Palestinian state. Addressing little of the Palestinians’ concerns, the plan is dismissed by Palestinian representatives.

Israel reaches normalization agreements with UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan. Israel takes *de jure* annexation temporarily off the table.

## 2020



# ISSUE *Background*

## THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION AND FINAL STATUS ISSUES

J Street believes that only a negotiated resolution agreed to by Israelis and Palestinians can meet the legitimate needs and national aspirations of both peoples. Given the reality that both peoples neither will nor should abandon the projects of building sovereign, national homes in their historic homeland, such a resolution will necessarily require two viable states — one Israeli and one Palestinian — living side-by-side in peace and security.

The contours of a workable negotiated outcome that would be broadly supported by both peoples are well known. Various initiatives by the parties and others have spelled out the principles and even many of the details of such a resolution, including President Clinton's parameters in 2000, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's proposal in 2008, the offer by Arab states and the Palestinians in 2013 to adjust and negotiate based on the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, and the official US principles put forward by Secretary of State Kerry under President Obama in 2016.

What is missing — and is further eroding as the conflict deepens — is the political will among the parties to take the steps necessary to meaningfully compromise and conclude a peace agreement. While pluralities of both peoples would support a resolution resulting in two states, Israel's current government is actively, publicly opposed to such an outcome and taking steps to undermine it, while the Palestinian leadership may be unwilling or unable to make further concessions as it struggles to maintain power and legitimacy after over a decade without democratic elections over a deeply fractured and disillusioned polity.

This impasse won't be overcome by pushing the parties to immediately engage bilaterally at an empty table. A viable framework for moving toward a comprehensive negotiated resolution will first require careful international, regional and bilateral coordination by the United States and others with the parties toward terms of reference. It will also require a package of incentives and enhanced civil society cooperation that create an environment conducive to genuine progress on the final status issues.

The following is a series of issues widely considered to be final status issues and J Street's positions on how they can be resolved as part of a conflict-ending agreement:

### Security

A conflict-ending resolution that results in two states is the only way to guarantee Israel's security in the long term. Nobody can guarantee a complete end to all violence once a peace deal is reached. But it is clear that without a negotiated resolution to the conflict, violence will continue. Indeed, Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory has not made it secure; in fact, as many of Israel's senior security officials have argued, the opposite is the case.

A negotiated resolution will ensure that Israel has secure, defensible, universally recognized borders. A cornerstone of such an agreement will be the fulfillment of Palestinian security obligations and the cessation of acts of violence terror. Accordingly, a resolution to the conflict must be accompanied by strong and enforceable security arrangements, such as those proposed by General John Allen in 2014, as well as an international mechanism that holds the parties responsible for maintaining their commitments.

### Borders

A viable resolution to the conflict will result in the establishment of final, internationally recognized borders between Israel and a future Palestinian state based on the pre-1967 lines with limited, agreed-upon land swaps of equivalent size and quality. These borders would allow established Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem and some of the large West Bank settlement blocs close to the Green Line to be incorporated into the State of Israel — resulting in communities that are currently home to three-quarters of all Israelis living over the Green Line becoming part of internationally recognized Israel.

## Refugees

The 1948 war that led to the creation of Israel also left hundreds of thousands of Palestinians as displaced refugees. Today, their descendants are scattered across the globe, many lacking citizenship and residing in refugee camps. A solution that offers a measure of justice, recognition of their plight and a mutually agreed-upon resolution of their status is a necessary part of a peace treaty.

Past peace proposals have offered Palestinian refugees citizenship in a future state of Palestine. Israel has also offered monetary compensation and a symbolic acceptance of some refugees into Israel. Former Israeli Prime Minister Olmert reportedly offered to accept 5,000 refugees, while President Abbas has pressed for up to 60,000.

J Street believes that this issue may be resolved by giving all Palestinian refugees the right to live in the State of Palestine, providing monetary compensation for those who choose not to do so, launching an international effort to resettle all Palestinians still living in refugee camps into permanent homes, allowing those in other countries to resettle permanently in the countries in which they reside and allowing a very limited, primarily symbolic number of refugees to return to Israel for the purpose of family reunification.

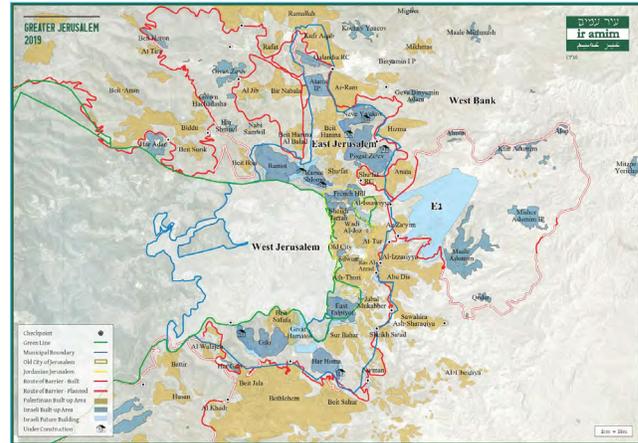
## Jerusalem

Jerusalem's ultimate status and borders are matters that can only be resolved as part of a negotiated agreement between official Israeli and Palestinian authorities and endorsed by both peoples.

J Street believes that Israel's capital is in Jerusalem and will be internationally recognized as such in the context of an agreed conflict-ending resolution, through which the majority-Jewish areas of Jerusalem are recognized as the capital of Israel and Palestinian areas of East Jerusalem become the capital of the future Palestinian state.

Negotiations have produced creative ideas for resolving the hardest issues, including sovereignty and management arrangements for the Old City and the Holy Basin that guarantee all Jews freedom of access and worship at the Western Wall, as well as freedom of access and worship for all peoples to their respective holy sites.

In advance of a negotiated resolution, all sides should refrain from unilateral actions – including new construction of Jewish housing in the Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, evictions, demolitions and mass revocations of Palestinians' residency status – that will make the ultimate resolution of this issue even more difficult.



American elected officials should respect the need for the permanent status of Jerusalem to be determined in the context of a negotiated two-state solution, and refrain from steps, rhetorical or practical, that inflame an already tense situation. J Street therefore regards the Trump administration's relocation of the US Embassy to Jerusalem — and claims by President Trump that he had thereby taken the status of Jerusalem "off the table" as a highly provocative and counterproductive step that has demonstrably eroded the United States' credibility as a mediator in the conflict.

J Street believes the next US administration should reinstate an independent US diplomatic mission to the Palestinians in East Jerusalem that is physically and institutionally separate from the US Embassy. While the next administration is likely to keep the US Embassy in Jerusalem, it could offset much of the harm caused by the Trump administration's move by declaring that it is the intention of the United States, upon the achievement of a negotiated resolution to the conflict, to open an embassy in East Jerusalem to the Palestinian state.

## Mutual Recognition

A viable resolution to the conflict will recognize the right of the Jewish people to statehood and recognize the right of the Palestinian people to statehood, without prejudice to the equal rights of the parties' respective citizens — in other words, two states for two peoples, one Jewish and one Palestinian, with mutual recognition and full equal rights for all their respective citizens.

## US SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL

J Street believes that US security assistance to Israel plays a critical role in maintaining Israel's security against serious external threats, and helps to advance US national interests. Throughout our history we have advocated for robust security assistance packages, including the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) negotiated between the Israeli government and the Obama administration, as well as lobbied in support of legislation to authorize and appropriate all of the aid pledged. We believe that Israel should continue to receive from the United States the full amount of security assistance outlined in the MOU: \$3.8 billion per year for the duration of the agreement.

At the same time, we believe that US security aid must be used only to address to Israel's genuine defense needs, and not to help implement or sustain illegal, unilateral actions which undermine Israel's security, trample on Palestinian rights and contravene longstanding US interests and values. In particular, American taxpayers must not foot the bill for unilateral annexation in the West Bank.

Annexation crosses a major red line of international law and goes against decades of bipartisan US policy. Much of Israel's security establishment has made clear that annexation and efforts to perpetuate permanent occupation are harmful to Israel's genuine interests, exacerbating conflict and instability. The threat of annexation must be met with meaningful consequences — including a thorough review and update of how US security assistance to Israel is provided and used. Congress and the next administration must take steps

to ensure that US security aid is not used to implement or maintain annexation, the expansion of settlements, the demolition of Palestinian homes or other moves that entrench occupation.

Restricting US aid to use only for specific purposes is responsible, standard practice. Supporting such use restrictions is very different than advocating for security assistance to be “cut” (i.e., ended or reduced outright) or “conditioned” (i.e., withheld until certain conditions are met). US security aid to other recipient countries is currently subject to much more stringent accounting and approval measures. In the interest of transparency and accountability, it is appropriate to stop applying a double standard and ensure Congress and American taxpayers have due visibility into how US aid is used by Israel, as well.

Though we won't support or agree on all policy or legislative proposals, J Street is encouraged by the vibrant discussion emerging on the most effective use of US security assistance. We believe it is important to engage in these debates — not shut them down. As the Israeli government pursues increasingly destructive actions that imperil the prospects for a negotiated peace, it's vital to consider how the US-Israel relationship should evolve to actually promote the genuine shared interests of both countries — and to avoid enabling the harmful agenda of the Israeli settlement movement and its allies. We will continue to support nuanced, effective and progressive positions which we believe can be implemented and can achieve broad popular support from the American Jewish community and the American people.

## US ASSISTANCE BENEFITING THE PALESTINIANS

Just as ensuring the security of Israel is a vital American interest, so is restoring and maintaining robust US assistance benefiting the Palestinian people through both bilateral aid, including cooperation with Palestinian security forces, and funding of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

Subject to considerable statutory limitations and congressional and executive oversight, US assistance benefitting Palestinians has served as an essential component of efforts by previous administrations of both parties to enhance security and quality of life for both Palestinians and Israelis. This long-standing American consensus mirrors Israeli security authorities' own consistent backing for such US assistance — and their repeated warnings that the Trump administration's

cut-off of such aid has undermined Israeli security by exacerbating Gaza's humanitarian crisis and further destabilizing the West Bank.

US assistance benefitting the Palestinian people impacts the security not just of Israel, but of the entire immediate region. This is especially true when it comes to the region-wide operations of UNRWA, to which the United States has typically provided around a quarter of the agency's operating budget. UNRWA provides vital humanitarian and development services to Palestinian refugees, including but not limited to primary and vocational education, health care and emergency relief. UNRWA operates not just within the West Bank and Gaza, but in neighboring countries which rely upon its efforts to assist millions of Palestinians whom they would otherwise be unable to

adequately provide for. Recipients of UNRWA services include more than two million Palestinian refugees living in Israel's neighbor Jordan and nearly half a million Palestinian refugees impacted by the horrific conflict in Syria.

The direct relationship between US assistance to Palestinians and the security and stability of Israel and its neighbors is undeniable, but far from the only reason Congress and previous administrations have consistently provided such aid. In addition to the strategic necessity

for generous US assistance to vulnerable populations, there is a clear moral imperative to do what we prudently can to help others in need. US assistance to Palestinians is, in addition to its purely practical benefits, a means of recognizing their dignity and standing as individuals and as a people. It is an acknowledgment that their suffering is real, and a reiteration of our commitment to help end the conflict at the root of it.

## OCCUPATION, ANNEXATION AND SETTLEMENTS

The ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory is a major obstacle to the achievement of Israeli-Palestinian peace, is a systemic injustice violating the rights of the Palestinian people, and poses a severe threat to Israel's long-term future as a democratic homeland for the Jewish people. Military rule over millions of Palestinians who lack civil and political rights represents a daily infringement on the basic rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people, and has been extremely detrimental to Israel's democracy, security, economy and regional standing.

J Street strongly opposes *de jure* unilateral Israeli annexation of Palestinian territory in the West Bank. Unilateral annexation is deliberately intended to prevent the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, and would institutionalize a system in which stateless Palestinian residents of the West Bank are ruled permanently and undemocratically by Israel. It would fundamentally betray the democratic principles of Israel's founders, severely imperil the US-Israel relationship and make it nearly impossible to maintain strong bipartisan support for Israel in the US. Accordingly, it is opposed by the majority of Israelis and the overwhelming majority of the Israeli security establishment.

Just as critically, J Street opposes settlement expansion, demolitions of Palestinian homes, lack of freedom of movement, denial of access to water and other forms of "creeping" or *de facto* annexation that are also designed to entrench the occupation, prevent the creation of a Palestinian state and make it impossible for Israelis and Palestinians to reach a peaceful resolution to their conflict.

In order to help prevent *de jure* annexation from taking place and to push back against the *de facto* "creeping annexation" taking place every day, J Street believes that responsible American lawmakers and political leaders must warn Israeli leaders that unilateral annexation of any kind will have serious, tangible ramifications for the US-Israel relationship.

US officials and Members of Congress should clearly and consistently refer to West Bank settlements as illegal, as the position of the US government has done in the past and as is the view of the United Nations and most other countries, including all of the European Union. They should make clear that the United States will not object to due criticism by international organizations of Israeli actions in the occupied territories, while continuing to oppose efforts on the world stage that unfairly or disproportionately target Israel. They should reinforce through executive action and legislation the legal differentiation between the State of Israel proper and the occupied Palestinian territories, including ensuring that settlement products sold in the United States are not labelled as "Made in Israel" and that US laws applying to Israel are applied only to the state itself and not to the West Bank. They should make clear that the US will not help foot the bill for the implementation of unilateral annexation and the entrenchment of occupation, and accordingly will consider how to restrict the uses to which US aid can be put by the Israeli government.

## TERRORISM AND INCITEMENT

J Street unequivocally condemns all acts of terror and violence perpetrated by any state or any non-state actor against the State of Israel or its people. We recognize the fundamental right of Israel to take action to prevent and address acts of terror and violence. We also recognize

that Palestinians have the same fundamental right to safety and security that Israelis and civilians everywhere do. As required under international law, we believe the Israeli military should take every due precaution to protect the safety of Palestinian civilians.

J Street supports efforts to hold the Palestinians to their commitments to prevent terror and violence that targets Israel and its citizens, and has called on the Palestinians to fully comply with their obligations to crack down on violence and incitement. We also believe that Israelis who perpetrate price tag attacks, incite, and commit other acts of violence against the civilian Palestinian population should be prosecuted and punished to the fullest extent of the law — and that the Israeli government should also

repudiate bigoted or otherwise incendiary rhetoric by its own officials whenever such instances occur.

J Street strongly encourages the parties to revisit and implement a long-standing proposal to reconvene the Trilateral Commission on Incitement, via which the US, Israel and the Palestinians could address and propose corrective action in response to charges of incitement.

## BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT AND SANCTIONS MOVEMENT

The question of boycotts, divestment and sanctions has drawn increasing attention in the absence of a clear horizon for reaching a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The issue is roiling many campuses and being taken up by city councils, state houses and Congress. J Street has a principled and nuanced position to guide its work on this issue.

Below are the bedrock principles that guide us in responding to and dealing with BDS.

- 1. We do not advocate for or support any boycott, divestment or sanctions initiative whatsoever.**
- 2. J Street has always been and remains opposed to the Global BDS Movement.**

J Street advocates for a two-state solution and a secure, Jewish and democratic future for Israel. The Global BDS Movement does not support the two-state solution, recognize the right of the Jewish people to a state or distinguish between opposition to the existence of Israel itself and opposition to the occupation of the territory beyond the Green Line. Further, some of the Movement's supporters and leaders have trafficked in unacceptable anti-Semitic rhetoric. The Movement is not a friend to Israel, nor does its agenda, in our opinion, advance the long-term interests of either the Israeli or Palestinian people.

- 3. We do not oppose boycott, divestment or sanctions initiatives that explicitly support a two-state solution, recognize Israel's right to exist and focus only on occupied territory beyond the Green Line.**

These kinds of initiatives are different than those advocated and initiated by the Global BDS Movement.

It is critical to maintain the distinction between boycott and divestment efforts which work against the interests of Israel, and initiatives which are limited to opposing the occupation.

While we do not oppose these initiatives, we do not support them either.

- 4. There is a fundamental distinction between the state of Israel and the territory that it controls over the Green Line, and that distinction must be maintained.**

J Street believes it is vital for the future of Israel that this distinction be maintained and clarified wherever it is now obscured. Funds contributed to the settlement movement help perpetuate the occupation and blur the distinction between democratic Israel and the occupied territory beyond the Green Line.

Our work on this principle takes place at three basic levels: individual, communal and governmental.

**Individual:** We believe that individuals should have as much information and agency as possible when deciding how to contribute money to Israel. Individuals should be able to choose for themselves whether they wish to purchase products made in the occupied territory. Labels that accurately distinguish between products made in the state of Israel and those originating in the territory over the Green Line maintain this important distinction and provide consumers the information they need in making their consumption decisions.

**Communal:** We believe that non-profit organizations and institutions have an obligation to provide the members of their communities with maximum transparency about how, where and why funds are spent in Israel and in Israeli-controlled territory.

Organizations should make clear whether and to what extent they contribute funds to projects in the settlements. If they have an internal policy prohibiting, limiting or permitting the contribution of funds to projects in the settlements, they should make this policy public.

**Governmental:** Since 1967, the United States government, through nine presidential administrations, has clearly insisted that the settlement enterprise in occupied territory is illegitimate and counterproductive to Israel's interests and to the cause of regional peace and stability. Until 2018, the US government deemed the settlements "illegal" under international law.

We believe that the actions of the US government should line up with this long-standing policy of opposition to settlements, and we will advocate for it to maintain and enforce that policy through its actions. Further, we will oppose legislative efforts at the state and federal level which, by blurring the distinction between Israel and the territory it controls over the Green Line, act to contravene that long-standing policy.

**5. The Global BDS Movement can only be successfully opposed with a genuine commitment to ending the occupation and achieving a two-state solution.**

Opposition to the Global BDS Movement that refuses to countenance any criticism of the occupation or of Israeli policy will never succeed in winning over any Movement supporters, and will only drive more and more frustrated and concerned people into their camp. It is precisely the wrong approach, and it is having a devastatingly counterproductive effect, especially on campus.

We are confident that our policy and approach—pro-Israel, pro-peace, anti-occupation—are by far the most effective means of countering the Global BDS Movement and maintaining support for Israel’s future as a Jewish and democratic state. It is rooted in a recognition of the real problems facing Israelis and Palestinians, and based on the progressive values and desire for pragmatic action that motivate students and activists.

**6. Efforts to exclude BDS Movement supporters from public forums and to ban them from conversations are misguided and doomed to fail. We support publicly debating and otherwise engaging with supporters of the BDS Movement.**

We are strong advocates of publicly debating BDS Movement supporters. We have proudly participated in such debates in the past and we will continue to do so. We are confident that our arguments against the BDS Movement are strong enough to win on their own merits, without the need to resort to attacks and exclusion.

Further, J Street is opposed to rhetoric that refers to the Global BDS Movement as a form of terrorism or violence. Such attacks oversimplify and misrepresent a complicated phenomenon, and they trivialize the horrific acts of actual terrorism and violence which Israel has faced and continues to face.

**7. J Street is opposed to legislative attempts to penalize or criminalize BDS activities because they are the wrong way to combat the BDS Movement.**

J Street is opposed to federal and state-level legislation that would criminalize individuals’ and non-governmental organizations’ BDS activities, penalize BDS supporters or impose BDS-related litmus tests on individuals. This type of misguided legislative overreach is the wrong way to fight BDS. By alienating and angering the liberal audiences that BDS seeks to engage and recruit, it actually empowers the BDS Movement. This legislation can too easily violate constitutional free speech protections and is fundamentally inconsistent with our democratic principles as Americans and as Jews. We urge lawmakers and Jewish communal leaders to engage Americans who are sympathetic to BDS in serious open conversation and debate, rather than seeking to silence them by aggressively penalizing their actions and positions.

## PALESTINIAN APPROACHES TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

We believe that the Palestinians have the right to join international organizations, institutions and conventions that welcome them, including as a member state. Given the precarious prospects for achieving the two-state outcome essential to Israel’s survival as a democratic homeland for the Jewish people, we believe Palestinian participation in such fora helps to bolster international support for two states while helpfully obligating the Palestinians to adhere to the responsibilities of statehood in key areas such as security, governance and human rights.

J Street is very concerned about the continuing bias against Israel that sometimes surfaces in international fora. At the same time, we reject the notion that the Palestinians seeking to participate in international organizations is an attempt to delegitimize Israel, or somehow represents

a form of attack. Seeking membership or other status in international fora is a peaceful, non-violent move that affirms international law — in stark contrast to the actions of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other terror organizations.

Accordingly, we believe the United States should no longer use its voice or vote to oppose Palestinian participation or membership in international organizations. We also vehemently oppose efforts to punish the PLO or the Palestinian Authority for its approaches to such entities. At a time when the United States should be looking for ways to encourage and deepen diplomacy, retaliation against the Palestinians for lawful, non-violent moves harms the prospects for progress, isolates the United States and undermines international law.

J Street believes that US laws currently operating to restrict US contributions to UNESCO — and which would sweep in any other United Nations specialized agency that grants Palestinians full membership status in the future — should be amended. American disengagement from UNESCO is just the first of many potential costly retreats this terrible law may force the United States to make from UN-affiliated agencies — including the World Intellectual Property Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency — of vital importance to America’s economy and security.

While J Street does not endorse Palestinian approaches to the International Criminal Court (ICC) or the ICC Prosecutor’s specific conclusions regarding the “Situation in Palestine,” we oppose efforts to defame and delegitimize the ICC and its officers. In particular, we opposed the Trump administration’s decision to sanction ICC personnel as an unacceptable attack on a rules-based international institution and a show of contempt for due process and the rule of law, and have urged the Biden administration to revoke these sanctions.

## THE GAZA STRIP

The situation in Gaza continues to be one of the most complex, explosive and tragic components of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The years since Israel’s 2005 disengagement from Gaza and the rise to power of Hamas have seen several rounds of full-fledged military confrontation between Hamas and Israel. These clashes have had devastating consequences for Gaza’s civilian population, economy and basic infrastructure, contributing to one of the world’s most horrifying humanitarian crises. Israeli civilians all along the southern border and beyond have been subjected to indiscriminate rocket fire and terror attacks. Thousands of Palestinians and over one hundred Israeli soldiers and civilians have been killed or wounded.

Multiple parties bear some measure of responsibility for the ongoing crisis. Hamas, an Islamist terrorist organization that preaches violence and hatred against Israel, has turned Gaza into a base for terrorist operations against Israel, while oppressing and essentially holding hostage the civilian population. Since 2007, Israel, along with Egypt, has maintained a strict military blockade of Gaza that results in the scarcity of many vital goods and materials. The Palestinian Authority and the Fatah party, while rightly opposing Hamas for its extreme ideology and support for terror, has at times taken provocative and destabilizing actions that further harm the people of Gaza.

It is clear that Israel has the right to defend itself against Hamas rocket fire and terrorist operations. At the same time, there is no long-term military solution to the situation that can guarantee Israeli security and a normal life for the people of Gaza. Ultimately, Hamas must recognize Israel’s existence, renounce violence and agree to abide by previous Israeli-Palestinian diplomatic agreements.

A real solution for Gaza must address both Israel’s legitimate security concerns from rockets, tunnels and incendiary devices, as well as the serious humanitarian issues that face the civilian population in Gaza, including easing the blockade to allow for greater freedom of movement for people and goods for non-military purposes, and the absence of vital infrastructure. International experts and Israeli security officials have proposed various innovative steps that could improve the humanitarian situation and alleviate rising tensions. One such proposal would include the construction of a seaport that would increase the flow of vital goods and supplies into Gaza and house much-needed new electricity and water-supply infrastructure.

J Street urges leaders on all sides to seriously pursue proposals like this, and to act responsibly and proactively to improve the situation in a way that helps avoid future rounds of conflict and ends the continual cycle of violence.

## IRAN

J Street believes that Iran obtaining nuclear weapons would pose a very serious threat to American and Israeli interests and to peace and stability in the Middle East and around the world. J Street strongly condemns the Iranian regime’s vile anti-American, anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic rhetoric, its outrageous support for acts of international terrorism, its destabilizing and bloody meddling in the

affairs of its neighbors, its buildup of weapons and forces in Syria and its deplorable domestic human rights record.

J Street therefore strongly endorses a diplomacy-first approach to ensure that Iranian regime does not develop a nuclear weapon, and to address the other threats it poses to our allies and the region.

To that end, J Street strongly supports the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreed to by Iran, the United States and five major world powers on July 14, 2015. We worked tirelessly to ensure the agreement was not rejected by Congress, because it blocked all of Iran's paths to developing a nuclear weapon and was underpinned by a robust regime of international monitoring and inspections. While it was fully implemented, the JCPOA advanced US security interests and removed an existential threat to Israel.

We therefore regard President Trump's decision in May of 2018 to violate and abandon the JCPOA as not just an egregious foreign policy blunder, but an unprovoked and unjustified assault on international peace and security. Trump's abrogation of the agreement — coupled with his administration's "maximum pressure" campaign of levelling ever-increasing sanctions and belligerent rhetoric against Iran — has resulted in a security and diplomatic disaster for the United States. Today, Iran has resumed some of its most sensitive nuclear activities. Its hardliners

are increasingly emboldened in the region and have openly launched missiles against US troops. And the US is isolated on the world stage — even from its European allies — as the Trump administration seeks to terminate the JCPOA by using the snapback mechanism in the agreement, despite no longer being a participant in the deal.

J Street believes the next US administration, as a preliminary step in reestablishing a diplomacy-first approach to addressing threats posed by Iran, should come back into compliance with the JCPOA in tandem with Iran, and then engage in further diplomacy on additional matters both within and beyond the nuclear file.

In the 116th Congress, J Street also supported legislative efforts to restrain the Trump administration from using unauthorized military force against Iran, as well as legislation to disengage the US military from involvement in the Yemen conflict.

## ANTISEMITISM, RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA

The candidacy and presidency of Donald Trump has both fueled and been fueled by a shocking wave of open and sometimes deadly antisemitism, racism, xenophobia and other bigotry. Our values and the Jewish historical experience that informs them compels us to use our voice and power to lend further weight to those communities, organizations and leaders fighting this rising tide of hatred that we unfortunately expect to continue in the post-Trump era.

J Street is proud to have supported myriad efforts in this area, including legislation in the 116th Congress to:

- strengthen the office of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism;
- overturn the Trump administration's anti-Muslim

travel ban;

- end the horrifying practice of family separation at the border;
- increase admissions and support for refugees;
- oppose white supremacy and white nationalism;
- confront systemic racism and police violence; and
- prevent disenfranchisement of voters of color in US elections.

# KEY *Staff*

## Jeremy Ben-Ami

### President

Jeremy Ben-Ami is the President of J Street, bringing to the role both deep experience in American politics and government and a passionate commitment to the state of Israel. Ben-Ami's family connection to Israel goes back 130 years to the first aliyah (immigration to Israel) when his great-grandparents were among the first settlers in Petah Tikva. His grandparents were one of the founding families of Tel Aviv, and his father was an activist and leader in the Irgun, working for Israel's independence and on behalf of efforts to rescue European Jews before and during World War II.

Ben-Ami's political resume includes serving in the mid-1990s as the Deputy Domestic Policy Advisor in the White House to President Bill Clinton and working on seven presidential and numerous state and local campaigns. He was Howard Dean's National Policy Director in 2004 and helped manage a mayoral campaign in New York City in 2001. For nearly three years in the late 90s, Jeremy lived in Israel, where he started a consulting firm that worked with Israeli non-profit organizations and politicians. He was chosen by America's weekly Jewish newspaper, *The Forward*, for three years as part of the "Forward 50", the publication's compilation of the most influential Jewish Americans. He was one of 50 "People of the Decade" selected by *Ha'aretz*, the influential Israeli daily newspaper, and *The Jerusalem Post* included him in its list of the "50 Most Influential Jews in the World." Ben-Ami received a law degree from New York University and is a graduate of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Relations at Princeton University.

## Jessica Smith

### Chief Operating Officer

Jessica Smith has an extensive background in organizational management, strategic communications, campaign strategy, policy development and stakeholder outreach—within the public and private sectors, Capitol Hill and the White House. Smith came to J Street from the global public affairs firm Burson-Marsteller, where she served as a Managing Director and head of operations for the Public Affairs and Crisis practice. During her tenure at Burson, she was named to PRWeek's "40 Under 40" list of Public Relations professionals. Prior to Burson, Smith served in the Obama Administration—first as a senior spokesperson for the Department of Justice and then as the Director of External Affairs for FEMA, serving as the government's lead spokesperson during some of the most notable disasters, including Hurricane Sandy. Smith was Communications Director for Senator Jim Webb, working both in his US Senate office and on his 2006 campaign. She has managed congressional campaigns, served as a political director for Al Gore's 2000 presidential campaign and served as an advisor to then-Chairman Terry McAuliffe at the 2000 Democratic National Convention. Smith is a graduate of Cornell University and sits on the President's Council of Cornell Women.

## Dylan Williams

### *Senior Vice President for Policy and Strategy*

Named one of The Hill's "Top Lobbyists" three years in a row, Dylan Williams leads the government affairs team at J Street and is responsible for developing and executing the pro-Israel, pro-peace movement's legislative strategy in Washington, DC. Williams joined J Street in 2009 after serving as Counsel for Foreign Relations, Trade and Immigration to US Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME). Born and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii, Williams is a member of the New York Bar and holds a law degree and bachelor's degree in government from Cornell University.

## Debra Shushan, PhD

### *Director of Government Affairs*

Dr. Shushan is director of government affairs at J Street, where she manages the advocacy operations and activities of the Government Affairs team. As an analyst of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and US foreign policy, Dr. Shushan honed her expertise as director of policy and government relations at Americans for Peace Now. Prior to that, Dr. Shushan was assistant professor of government at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, VA, where she focused on the comparative politics and international relations of the Middle East, including the Gulf states. She was also a research fellow at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Doha, Qatar. Dr. Shushan's research and language studies have taken her to much of the Middle East, including Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Syria, Turkey and the UAE, in addition to Israel/Palestine. Dr. Shushan is a former Marshall Scholar, Truman Scholar, and Yale World Fellow, and served on the advisory board of the Yale World Fellows Program. She is a graduate of Harvard University (BA), Oxford University (MPhil) and Yale University (PhD).



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