



# ISSUE BRIEF: US POLICY FOLLOWING HAMAS' ASSAULT AGAINST ISRAEL AND REGARDING THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

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Hamas' appalling and deadly terror onslaught against Israel on October 7, 2023 has kicked off a chain of events – including a campaign of Israeli airstrikes in Gaza that have produced thousands of casualties – that is threatening to further destabilize the Middle East. Sound leadership by the Biden Administration and Congress will be crucial in the weeks and months ahead.

The following are J Street's current recommendations for US lawmakers:

## 1) Support the Israeli people and prioritization of efforts to free all hostages held in Gaza by:

- Unequivocally condemning the heinous violence and killing perpetrated against the Israeli people by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and backing the right and obligation of the Israeli government to defend its citizens, in accordance with international law – as [President Biden](#) and Members of Congress have done, including through the [Nadler-Goldman-Raskin letter](#) and the [House-passed McCaul-Meeks resolution](#) and the [Senate-passed Cardin-Risch resolution](#).
- Approving supplemental security assistance to Israel [requested](#) by President Biden, which includes \$4 billion to resupply its missile defense system and \$3.5 billion in foreign military financing.
- Insisting that the [safety and release of the hostages](#) held by Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza, including those who are American citizens, be prioritized and pursued in concert with regional governments and international organizations.
- Urging the Senate to swiftly [confirm Secretary Jack Lew](#), whose nomination has been [advanced](#) by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, as the US Ambassador to Israel.

## 2) Prioritize the safety and welfare of Palestinian civilians in Gaza facing war and humanitarian crisis by:

- Insisting, as [President Biden](#) and Members of Congress have done (including through the [Schakowsky-Pocan-Jayapal-McGovern House letter](#) and [Welch-Schatz-Van Hollen Senate letter](#)), that Israel adhere to international law in its operations against Hamas – including by taking all possible measures to limit the casualties of Palestinian civilians and ending the blanket siege depriving Gaza's civilians of water, food, fuel, and other critical supplies.
- Ramping up humanitarian assistance to Gaza – regarding which the \$100 million recently announced by the Biden Administration is a welcome start, and should be generously augmented with a portion of the [\\$9.15 billion requested](#) by President Biden for humanitarian efforts in Ukraine, Israel, Gaza, and elsewhere.
- Advocating for humanitarian pauses in Israel's campaign against Hamas, as the [Biden Administration](#) and [several Jewish Members of Congress](#) have done, to enable humanitarian aid to reach civilians, facilitate efforts to free the hostages, and provide safe passage for those (including [US citizens](#)) who wish to leave – with unequivocal guarantees that Gaza residents will be able to return.

### **3) Push for a halt to violence against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank and to the Netanyahu government's anti-democratic crackdown in Israel by:**

- Drawing attention to the increase in the frequency and severity of violent [settler attacks](#) terrorizing Palestinians in the West Bank (as [President Biden has done](#)) and [demanding](#) that the Israeli government prevent such attacks – some of which have included participation of Israeli soldiers and pose a danger of igniting a “[third front](#)” for Israel.
- Urging the Biden Administration to stress to Israeli authorities the importance of [upholding the rights of free speech](#), free assembly, and non-violent protest in the face of an anti-democratic crackdown in Israel. This repression has included the police [breaking up anti-war protests](#) and [arresting people for social media posts](#) related to the war in Gaza and the government approving [new regulations](#) that [may enable](#) authorities to shut down media organizations or arrest individuals for speech that “undermines morale.”

### **4) Prevent a dangerous widening of the Israel-Hamas war by:**

- Working with Israeli authorities to keep Israel's war aims [limited and achievable](#) to lessen the likelihood that Hizballah and other regional militias supported by Iran will be drawn to increase their involvement and mount more significant operations against Israel and US forces stationed in the region.
- Preventing a devastating war with Iran by resisting claims – for which the US, Israel, and regional partners have so far found [no evidence](#) – that Iran directed or was behind Hamas' attack on October 7, though Iran has certainly provided significant material and financial support to Hamas.

### **5) Lay the groundwork for a long-term political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by:**

- Making clear that there is no military solution that will end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which can only be brought to a close through a political solution. It should now be abundantly clear that resolving the conflict through a political solution is crucial for Israelis and Palestinians – and also for the broader region, for US national interests, and for maintaining global stability.
- Exhorting President Biden to back his important [statement](#) (“There's no going back to the status quo as it stood on October 6... [W]hen this crisis is over, there has to be a vision of what comes next, and in our view it has to be a two-state solution”) with a commitment for the US to play a leading role in developing and implementing that vision.
- Planning for a massive reconstruction effort in Gaza and for building up a new governance structure that could ultimately administer the Strip as part of a viable Palestinian state after the Israel-Hamas war. The Arab world – recommitted to pursuing a [revived Arab Peace Initiative](#) – should be encouraged to play a key role.

### **6) Minimize deleterious ripple effects of the Israel-Hamas war here in the United States by:**

- Speaking out against hate-fueled attacks against Americans of Jewish, Muslim, Palestinian, and Arab backgrounds – and denouncing in no uncertain terms violence against such individuals, including the murder of 6-year-old Palestinian-American Wadea Al Fayoume and attacks against Jewish Americans.
- Ensuring adequate physical security for houses of worship and nonprofit organizations that are at high risk of a terror attack – including by supporting the additional \$200 million for the [Nonprofit Security Grant Program](#) requested by President Biden in his [supplemental funding request](#) to Congress.