



ISSUE BRIEF: ACHIEVING ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE IN THE WAKE OF THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

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In the weeks since Hamas' heinous attack against Israel on October 7, J Street has issued briefs with [short-term policy recommendations](#) detailing how US lawmakers can support Israel's right to defend its citizens and efforts to free the hostages, while also prioritizing the welfare of Palestinian civilians in Gaza. We have also called for specific measures addressing the [urgent situation in the West Bank](#) and setting [clear expectations for the Netanyahu government](#) regarding the conduct of the military campaign in Gaza.

Over the longer term, as [President Biden stated](#), "There's no going back to the status quo as it stood on October the 6th." Instead, "[T]here has to be a vision of what comes next. And, in our view, it has to be a two-state solution." We strongly agree with Secretary of State Blinken, who [stated clearly](#) that Gaza may not serve as a platform for terrorism, but neither can it be under Israeli occupation, blockade or siege, nor have its territory reduced, and that forcible displacement of Palestinians from Gaza must not be permitted. The rhetoric from [members of the Netanyahu government](#) has been alarming, as some have openly pushed for a [new Nakba](#), while others have called, along with some senior defense officials, for [indiscriminate destruction, siege, and establishment of settlements](#). These are real dangers, and the Biden Administration must ensure that they cannot be carried out on its watch.

The present issue brief provides recommendations for how to achieve the vision of a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It will require planning a security, political, and economic transition for Gaza and the West Bank now, and being prepared to implement the plan rapidly at the end of hostilities. There is a window of opportunity now to bring about a political solution to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians and it is critical that the Biden Administration do everything possible to seize the moment.

In order to realize the President's vision, we recommend the following steps:

1. The President should add detail to his vision for the "day after" the defeat of Hamas and the end of hostilities in Gaza, including:

- The goal of establishing a Palestinian state, which the US will commit to recognizing, within a limited timeframe – marking this as different from earlier "peace processes"
- Specific commitments to restoring civilian life and infrastructure in the devastated zone, including southern Israel and Gaza, and to connecting Gaza to the West Bank and East Jerusalem in a single political entity
- Emphasis on security arrangements that meet the needs of Israelis, Palestinians and neighboring countries

2. The Biden Administration should work with allies in the region to stand up a Transitional Authority, which:

- Will be charged with getting into and administering Gaza once Hamas is removed from operational control, proceeding quickly toward the objective of independent Palestinian statehood
- Would include willing Arab states, with strong indirect support from the US and other G7 and Western countries, working in concert with the United Nations
- Will develop a security plan, laying the groundwork now so its security force can move in and begin the process of replacing Israeli troops

3. The US, EU, and Arab states should invest in a “new Marshall Plan” to rebuild Gaza and rehabilitate Israeli communities devastated by Hamas’ attack:

- They should convene an early donors conference, at which the US should lead and encourage others by donating generously
- The conference should consider the establishment of a dedicated peacebuilding institution, such as the International Fund spearheaded by the Alliance for Middle East Peace
- Strengthening the physical infrastructure for a new Palestinian state will be key, and efforts should draw upon existing [proposals](#) for linking urban centers, within and between the West Bank and Gaza
- The complex reconstruction and development that will be required should not delay the launching of a diplomatic process to establish the independent Palestinian state

4. The Transitional Authority should work with the Palestinian Authority, enabling the PA to take over administration of an integrated Palestinian territory within a limited period:

- The US should press the PA to strengthen its legitimacy, initially by welcoming new leaders from Palestinian civil society and later through elections
- Whether or not President Abbas remains, the PA needs a new image of probity, competence and accountability to buttress its claim to represent the Palestinian people
- A revitalized PA will need to progress on key markers of security, administrative capacity and West Bank economic viability; it should show readiness to negotiate seriously, including by reiterating its recognition of the State of Israel, continuing security cooperation and stating its rejection of terrorism – including that committed by Hamas and Islamic Jihad

5. Regarding Israel’s role during the transition period, we note the following:

- The long-term success of any plan for transition to the stage of conflict resolution will likely depend on the establishment of a new Israeli government committed to a political resolution of the underlying Israel-Palestinian conflict

- Meanwhile, the US government will need the political will to press the Netanyahu government to facilitate establishment of a Transitional Authority that can take over Gaza's administration in short order after fighting stops, allowing the swift exit of the most visible elements of Israel security presence in the Strip
- In addition to taking [urgent measures](#) to address settler violence and the escalating situation in the West Bank, the US should push for Israel to take positive steps, such as pulling back from parts of Area C

6. As the US government prepares to launch a new diplomatic initiative, we urge it to:

- Encourage the Arab League to update and renew its Arab Peace Initiative, since the lure of full regional normalization with the Arab world envisioned by the Abraham Accords will be a major carrot for Israel and can contribute to the start of diplomacy
- Stress to Israel that ongoing US support for military operations in Gaza will be heavily impacted by whether Israel acknowledges and accepts the goal of Palestinian statehood
- Prepare to play a mediating role in multilateral negotiations that include substantial engagement from Arab states, the EU, and the UN
- Consider contributing to new regional security arrangements that will be key to any new diplomatic initiative
- Examine the creative ideas put forward by proponents of Israeli-Palestinian confederation, which can inspire both publics and help manage some of the tougher core issues (such as settlements) that have stymied prior negotiations

Conclusion

The current Israel-Hamas war illustrates in dramatic fashion that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is, and will remain, central to Middle East stability. It must be resolved, not just managed or shrunk. It cannot be bypassed through pursuit of other initiatives. The US will need to use both carrots and sticks with all key parties, which will involve unavoidable political challenges.

J Street stands ready to be the Biden Administration's partner - defending the President's vision for a just, sustainable two-state solution as the only way for the two peoples to live peacefully in national homelands and supporting him in taking the necessary steps to navigate the challenges ahead.