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J STREET'S POLICY AGENDA for the Trump Administration

As J Street heads into the next four years of the Trump Administration, we will need to consider new ways to continue to stand up for our pro-Israel, pro-peace, pro-democracy values. This will not be an easy time. Many of the Trump Administration's domestic policy actions and overall agenda are in direct contradiction to J Street's values. Some of the Administration's broader foreign policy edicts, such as shuttering USAID and picking fights with key allies around the world, will also have deeply damaging effects for Israel and Palestine.

It is still unclear where the Administration will land on the question of annexing parts of the West Bank. Trump's proposal for the US to take over Gaza and forcibly displace two million Palestinians is horrifying and anathema to all J Street stands for. At the same time, the Administration has also taken some positive steps. Specifically, Middle East Envoy Steve Witkoff worked closely with Biden Administration negotiators to get a ceasefire and hostage deal and is continuing to work to ensure full implementation so that all of the hostages come home and the war ends. Trump has expressed a desire to get a normalization deal with Saudi Arabia and Israel, and as part of that may be willing to push significant concessions for the Palestinians.

In the context of this dichotomy and the unpredictable nature of the Administration's policies, this memo outlines a number of the J Street's key policy priorities for at least the next year, but likely longer. Where the Administration's policies run counter to our recommendations we will oppose them, but where we have overlapping interests we will support bipartisan cooperation. This memo will be followed in the months ahead by a series of papers that will go into greater detail on a number of the highest priority issues laid out here.

End the war in Gaza, bring the hostages home, invest in rebuilding Gaza, and build a viable governing and security alternative to Hamas instead of perpetuating the conflict

The Trump Administration should use all available leverage to pressure Hamas to return all of the hostages and Israel to end the war in Gaza. J Street rejects any proposal to have Israel and the United States forcibly displace the people of Gaza and/or occupy the Strip. Instead, the United States must persuade, including through judicious pressure, the Israeli government to work

together with the United States, Arab partners, the international community, and the Palestinian Authority (PA) on a serious and viable plan for post-conflict Gaza. Such a plan would involve a huge surge in humanitarian aid and major economic investments in reconstruction — both of which will be undermined unless the Trump Administration changes its approach to foreign assistance. It will also require the insertion of a transitional international/Arab-led force in Gaza, training of Palestinian Authority Security Forces to ensure they can eventually take over security control of Gaza; and agreement on a transitional governance structure that includes some PA role from the beginning and ultimately results in a full reintegration of Gaza and the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority. Such an approach is a years-long project and will be exceedingly difficult. However, it is the only way to replace Hamas. Failing to pursue this strategy could lead to a collapse of the ceasefire, which will prevent the release of the hostages.

Failing to pursue a viable alternative post-war governance path could lead to a resumption of Israeli operations against Hamas targets with no plan for replacing the governing structure — a recipe for perpetual war that will lead to indefinite misery for the two million people living in Gaza, not replace Hamas with any viable alternative, and come at a very high cost to Israel — both in terms of military and economic costs as well as international isolation. A third possibility where Israel and Hamas find a way to end the war and get the hostages out with no real agreement on “day after” for Gaza, is far preferable to restarting the war but will leave the situation in Gaza to fester with Hamas still in control, few prospects for reconstruction, and Israel less secure.

Oppose settlements, annexation, and settler violence. Take steps to improve the situation in the West Bank and set conditions for a Palestinian state, including applying pressure on the Palestinian Authority to reform.

J Street opposes any steps towards annexation whether de facto or de jure, taken by the Netanyahu government, and calls on the Trump Administration to oppose these actions. The Trump Administration's reversal of President Biden's Executive Order that sought to counter settler violence by targeting both individuals and organizations who facilitate this behavior was an early setback and should be reinstated. New means will be needed to make clear to the extreme right wing government of Netanyahu, Smotrich, and Ben-Gvir that the United States opposes steps that trample on Palestinian rights and make a Palestinian state less likely.

There is also a need to relax restrictions on Palestinians in the West Bank — most importantly by transferring parts of Area C to Palestinian control, both for economic development and freedom of movement. Additionally, the United States should work with and apply pressure on the Palestinian Authority to make necessary reforms, including: ensuring implementation of the reforms to end the prisoner payment system and replace it with a social welfare system, implementing better governance and rooting out corruption, and ultimately holding new elections to put in place a leadership representative of the Palestinian people.

Pursue a “23 state solution,” to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to negotiate a regional peace and security agreement between Israel and its 22 Arab neighbors — one of which must be a future Palestinian state.

Israel's increasing integration into the Middle East, most recently through the Abraham Accords, presents significant opportunities to end decades of conflict and increase economic prosperity for millions across the region. Conversely, as we have seen with the war in Gaza, failure to address

the Palestinian issue will hinder the warming of relations between Israel and its neighbors, and has already led to an erosion of some of the progress that was made under the Abraham Accords.

There are numerous pathways to get to both a two-state solution and a simultaneous comprehensive regional peace, but any step-by-step process must involve:

- 1) Agreements on major international investment in Gaza and Israeli facilitation of an effective “day-after” strategy;
- 2) Tangible, credible, irreversible steps on the ground that improve freedom for Palestinians and set the conditions for the establishment of a Palestinian state in exchange for additional steps towards economic and military cooperation between Israel its Arab neighbors;
- 3) A pace that persuades skeptical Palestinians that this time the process will be implemented.

All of this would culminate in full recognition by the Arab world of the State of Israel, and full recognition by Israel of a Palestinian state. Along the way, Arab leaders will need to pursue vigorous public diplomacy to convince the Israeli public that peace and security is possible. The United States should be willing to make major commitments of its own to both Israel and the Arab states as part of a step-by-step process and eventual agreement.

Take advantage of Iran’s diminished military capability to pursue nuclear and regional diplomacy from a position of strength.

Iran has experienced unprecedented setbacks, including the fall of its ally Syrian dictator Bashar Al-Assad; the dramatic weakening of Hezbollah both through the conflict with Israel that saw much of its leadership eliminated and the fall of Assad dramatically impacting its ability to rearm; Israeli and American cooperation to defeat Iranian ballistic missile attacks; and Israeli operations to degrade Iran’s air defenses. At the same time, this weakening in Iran’s regional position has caused it to double down on its nuclear program.

Military and economic pressure alone has historically failed to shift Iran’s calculus, while combining that pressure with clear-eyed diplomacy is what successfully achieved the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which dramatically rolled back its nuclear program. Given this history, now is the time for the US to test whether a meaningful diplomatic breakthrough with Iran is possible in order to roll back Iran’s nuclear program and regional ambitions, while continuing to leverage economic sanctions against Iran unless it makes necessary concessions. At the same time, pursuing a “23 state solution” and strengthening a unified front across the region will only apply more pressure on Iran, weakening its power and leverage in the region.

Support US security assistance to Israel with robust oversight and enforcement of relevant laws that govern aid to all US allies.

US assistance to Israel plays a critical role in assuring Israel’s security against serious external threats and advancing US national interests. There was overwhelming bipartisan support for the 10-year memorandum of understanding (MOU), negotiated by the Obama Administration in 2016, providing Israel with \$3.8 billion per year, and for the \$14 billion supplemental in security assistance to Israel passed in 2024 in the aftermath of the October 7th attacks.

As with all nations that receive US security assistance, aid to Israel is legally subject to a number of restrictions and conditions set forth in the Arms Export Control Act and the Foreign Assistance

Act. Israel must be held to the same standards as any other country receiving US aid and weapons, and US laws and policies should be consistently and impartially enforced across the board. As has been the case with Israel and other security partners, ensuring compliance with such laws and policies has at times necessitated appropriate, measured enforcement action including suspension, withholding, or increased auditing of specific deliveries of aid or arms. US security aid should address Israel's genuine defense needs and not be diverted to implement or sustain actions that undermine Israel's security, trample on Palestinian rights, violate international law or contravene longstanding US interests and values.

Advocate for American and Israeli democracy and democratic institutions.

The US-Israel relationship is strongest when both allies maintain their shared values of democracy, pluralism, and a system of checks and balances. It becomes weaker when democratic institutions are undermined or threatened in either the United States or Israel. Unfortunately, both Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Trump have a long track record of undermining the institutions of both Israeli and American democracy. Therefore, J Street will continue to advocate against actions that undermine these values and weaken the relationship, whether it be politicization of law enforcement institutions and intimidation of the media in the United States or judicial reform and attacks on the media in Israel.

Counter antisemitism in the United States while supporting free speech.

Since October 7th, there has been a disturbing surge in antisemitic incidents in the United States and across the globe. This has come from both the far right, where Donald Trump has enabled extremists and created a permission structure for antisemitic dialogue and action, but also from the far left, where legitimate criticism of Israeli government policies has at times crossed into antisemitism. Criticism of policies is part of a healthy democracy and should be protected as free speech. However, when rhetoric crosses into violence, support for violence, targeting and excluding American Jews for actions taken by the Israeli government, or supporting terrorist organizations, it must be condemned and addressed. At the same time, the US government should not enact policies and legislative actions that present almost any criticism of Israeli government action as antisemitic, limit free speech, and make it harder to distinguish between genuinely problematic and harmful behavior and legitimate political disagreement.

Preserve the international liberal order and work through international institutions when possible.

J Street believes that the web of international institutions established after World War II have been central to maintaining global stability and establishing important global norms over the past 80 years and should be preserved. There are venues, such as at the UN Human Rights Council or the UN General Assembly, where these organizations disproportionately criticize Israel. There are also differing views on both the International Criminal Court's decision to indict Prime Minister Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Gallant and Israel related rulings and decisions at the International Court of Justice. That being said, taking reckless actions that undermine or defund these organizations both weakens U.S. influence and power around the world and undermines our ability to impact the agenda of these institutions.