



A Framework for Peace in Israel and Palestine

It is urgent to free the hostages in Gaza; stop the bloodshed in Israel and Palestine; establish lasting security for both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples; achieve the aspiration of the Palestinian people for a sovereign state; and establish a process of true sustainable development in the Eastern Mediterranean/Middle East (EMME) region. The horrific terrorist attack by Hamas on October 7 and the devastating Israeli bombing and invasion of Gaza after that, have shocked the world and intensified the global search for a path to long-term peace in Israel and Palestine.

Fortunately, an overwhelming majority of UN member states, including Israel's Arab neighbors, strongly agree with the possibility of a just and lasting peace based on the two-state solution. Peace with mutual security for Israel and Palestine can and should be implemented through the unanimous backing of the UN Security Council (UNSC), based on its powers under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, and with the overwhelming majority support of the UN General Assembly.

This peace would not be the result of direct Israel-Palestine negotiations, which have repeatedly been stymied by hardliners on both sides and by Israel's long-standing illegal policy of building settlements in the occupied territories that now include more than 700,000 Israeli settlers. The peace would instead be secured through the powers of the UNSC and UN General Assembly. Enforcement would be secured with UN-supervised peacekeepers and UN-backed economic incentives and sanctions as needed. Neither Hamas nor the Netanyahu government would be permitted to block a peace arrangement backed by the world community.

The UN Security Council would act on the basis of multiple existing resolutions dating back more than 50 years, including UNSC Resolutions 242, 238, 1397, 1515, and 2334. Peacekeepers under UNSC supervision would be drawn from the Arab nations to disarm the violent militia groups that threaten Israel, including Hamas, and to provide security for the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

The solution to the crisis certainly cannot be left to the Government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, which steadfastly rejects and undermines the two-state solution, nor to

Hamas, a terrorist organization that also rejects a two-state solution and seeks the elimination of Israel.

Nor can it be left to the outcome of the current fighting. Netanyahu’s war has killed more than 11,000 innocent Gazans to date, including more than 4,500 children, and has displaced hundreds of thousands of civilians. The war is unleashing vigilante violence by Israelis against Palestinians in the West Bank, isolating Israel diplomatically, and threatening world peace.

Netanyahu’s war is manifestly not in pursuit of a just peace. Netanyahu and his cabinet explicitly reject the two-state solution, aim to subdue the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, and propose more Israeli settlements in occupied Palestine and permanent Israeli sovereignty over East Jerusalem. Their policies amount to apartheid and ethnic cleansing. Precisely because of these injustices, the war is likely to escalate into a regional war, drawing in Hezbollah, Iran, and others, unless a just political solution is established.

Before October 7, Netanyahu sought to “normalize” relations with Arab states without also addressing the need for a Palestinian state, yet this cynical approach was doomed to fail. A real and lasting peace can only be achieved together with political rights for the people of Palestine.

Netanyahu should have resigned on October 7 to take responsibility of his flagrant failure to protect Israel’s border with Gaza on that day. His cabinet is filled with religious zealots—including Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who propounds a Greater Israel that includes Palestinian lands—who are more than content with Apartheid rule over the Palestinian people. As the Israel Policy Forum said of him in March 2023, “Smotrich has long expressed views that are abhorrent to the vast majority of American Jews, from anti-Arab racism, to virulent homophobia, to a full-throated embrace of Jewish supremacy. To this list, we can now add his endorsement of violence against innocents based on their ethnic heritage.”

True leaders for peace on both sides have repeatedly been martyred, including the great Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat and the brave Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, both of whom were killed because they preached peaceful co-existence. Countless more Palestinians and Israelis—many whose names we don’t even know—have also died in the quest for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, victims of terrorism often by extremists of their own communities.

Despite these serious obstacles, there is a clear way forward to peace through the UN because the Arab and Islamic nations have long called for peace with Israel based on the two-state solution. In the Extraordinary Joint Arab-Islamic Summit in Riyadh on November 11, the Arab and Islamic leaders made the following declaration in favor of a two-state solution:

As soon as possible, a credible peace process should be launched on the basis of international law, legitimate international resolutions and the principle of land for peace. It says this should be within a specific time frame and based on the implementation of the two-state solution with international guarantees, leading to an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, the occupied Syrian Golan, the Shebaa Farms, the Kafr Hills, Shoba and the outskirts of the Lebanese town of Al-Mari. (English translation of Arabic original)

Importantly, the Arab-Islamic leaders drew specific attention to the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, that already twenty-one years ago affirmed that:

a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East is the strategic option of the Arab countries, to be achieved in accordance with international legality, and which would require a comparable commitment on the part of the Israeli government... [and] Further calls upon Israel to affirm (*inter alia*) [t]he acceptance of the establishment of a sovereign independent Palestinian state on the Palestinian territories occupied since June 4, 1967 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Arab countries stated clearly back in 2002 that such an outcome would lead to peace between the Arab nations and Israel, specifically that the Arab nations would “Consider the Arab-Israeli conflict ended, and enter into a peace agreement with Israel, and provide security for all the states of the region.” Alas, Netanyahu has been in power most of the period since 2009 and has done what he could to ignore the Arab Peace Initiative and keep it out of the view of the Israeli public.

The UN Security Council, including all permanent (P5) members, and operating in close coordination with the Arab-Islamic leadership, should quickly adopt a peace settlement based on the two-state solution, and commit to provide operational and financial support to its implementation. In particular, the UNSC resolution should commit the UN and neighboring states to help Israel and Palestine to establish mutual security, a demilitarization of militia forces in the region, and a move to Palestinian statehood.

The resolution would include the following eight points:

- An immediate release of all hostages, ceasefire by all parties, and flow of humanitarian aid under UN supervision;
- A peace-keeping force, drawn from Arab nations and operating under the mandate of the UN Security Council, to assume control of Gaza security for a period of five years;
- The immediate disarmament and demobilization of Hamas and other militias by the peacekeeping forces as part of the peace;
- The UN supervision of civilian administration of Gaza until the functions are transferred to the State of Palestine by end-2025;

- The establishment of Palestine as a UN member state, with capital in East Jerusalem and control over the Islamic Holy Sites, no later than end-2025;
- Diplomatic relations established between Israel and all Arab league states in conjunction with UN membership of the State of Palestine;
- A UN Reconstruction and Sustainable Development Fund for Palestine, to finance a long-term sustainable development program designed by Palestinian authorities and UN representatives;
- A regional economic development strategy involving Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other nations in the region.

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