

## **Israel's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: Honor Israel by Working for Peace**

*Churches for Middle East Peace applauds Israel's achievement of 60 years of statehood that is being commemorated this spring. A bedrock principle of the CMEP coalition is the safety and security of Israel within recognized borders and statehood for the Palestinians. CMEP believes that one of the most important ways Members of Congress can honor Israel's anniversary is to help it achieve a durable peace with its neighbors. From April – June there will be dedicated floor time for Members to make speeches in honor of Israel's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. CMEP urges all House members to take this opportunity to recognize Israel's many achievements and the necessity of a two-state resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for Israel's long-term security and future wellbeing. Failure of the Annapolis peace process could mean many more years of conflict for Israel and a continuing source of instability in the Middle East. Below are some key points and excerpts from speeches by major leaders that could be included in floor statements:*

### **60 Years After the Founding of Israel: The Time for Peace is Now**

As we mark 60 years after the founding of Israel, now is the time for Congress to support robust U.S. diplomacy to help Israel realize its quest for peace with a permanent status agreement. The need for peace is greater than ever – for Israel, for the United States and the broader region. The Annapolis conference created a new diplomatic process that requires sustained American engagement to make real progress in 2008. A continuation of the conflict, and its threat of ongoing violence and instability, will only further drain the energy and resources of Israel and strengthen more extremist elements in the region opposed to peace.

"[I]t's time for Israel to live in the security that is going to come with a peaceful and democratic neighbor...the United States sees the establishment of a Palestinian state, a two-state solution, as absolutely essential to the future of not just Palestinians and Israelis but also to the Middle East and, indeed, to American interests..." – *Secretary of State Rice, Ramallah, West Bank, October 2007*

"As I said before, our own interest is to reach an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. It's not because of the international process -- international pressure, but this is our own interest and our own need." – *Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, Jerusalem, September 2007*

"We are confident that there is no military solution to the conflict. Negotiations between us as equal partners should put a long-due end to the cycle of violence...Let us together make peace today before tomorrow. Let us live in two neighboring states..." – *Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, speech to the new Palestinian Legislative Council, February 2006*

### **Israel's Successes Not Yet Complete: A Secure & Peaceful Future Requires a Political Agreement**

Israel has a large and growing economy, a cutting-edge high-tech sector that accounts for 70% of industrial products, some of the finest academic universities and medical centers in the Middle East, and vibrant arts and culture, including a world renowned Philharmonic Orchestra. Yet according to a recent report by the *Maariv* newspaper, approximately a quarter of the Israeli population is considering emigration and almost half of the country's young people are thinking of leaving, citing the security situation as a key factor. Israel's many successes still have not as yet included one vital element: a peace agreement with the Palestinians and the broader Arab world that could help provide it with the security and international recognition it has long been denied.

"Ultimately, permanent security requires peace and permanent peace can only be obtained through security...It is in Israel's interest not to govern the Palestinians but for the Palestinians to govern themselves in their own state. A democratic Palestinian state fully at peace with Israel will promote the long-term security and well-being of Israel as a Jewish state." – *Former Israeli PM Ariel Sharon, Aqaba Summit, June 2003*

"The vast majority of the Israeli body politic is tired of being a nation perpetually at war...political engagement and dialogue are essential in the Arab-Israeli dispute because it is an axiom that when the political process breaks down there will be violence on the ground." – *Baker-Hamilton Report, November 2006*

## ***Israel's Future in the Middle East: Regional Security and Stability Through Peace***

Israel has faced years of conflict and remains vulnerable to acts of terror against its citizens and greater military confrontation. Yet, the peace agreements between Egypt and Israel and Jordan and Israel remain and are responsible for ending the threat of a large scale Middle East war. Full acceptance of Israel by all Arab states and normalized diplomatic and economic relations would provide a new day for Israel and the broader Middle East.

“The truth is that the peoples of the Middle East share the same fate. We are destined to be neighbors. Our futures are inevitably linked together. And no peace will be lasting if it fails to take this fact into account. This is as true for Israel as it is for other nations in the region. We have built a strong and dynamic democratic society that has much to be proud of. But for all of the country's achievements, we remain a nation struggling to realize our basic right to a peaceful existence side by side with our neighbors in the region.” – *Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, Asharq Alawsat newspaper, June 2007*

“[The Arab Peace Initiative] puts forward a path for both sides, to achieve what people want and need: a collective peace treaty with Israel and normal relations with every Arab state, collective security guarantees for all the countries of the region, including Israel, an end to the conflict, a dream every Israeli citizen has longed for since the creation of Israel...It must be a peace that makes Israel a part of the neighborhood, a neighborhood that extends from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, across the breadth of the southern Mediterranean, to the coast of the Indian Ocean. It must be a peace that enables the entire region to look forward with excitement and hope, putting its resources into productive growth, partnering across borders to advance development, finding opportunities, and solving common challenges.” – *King Abdullah of Jordan, Joint Session of Congress, March 2007*

## ***Commemoration of Israel's Founding: A Reminder that a Palestinian State Must Still be Born***

The 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Israel is an occasion to reflect on the founding of a state out of the ashes of epic tragedy. The modern state of Israel is a safe-haven for Jews worldwide after centuries of persecution that culminated in the Holocaust. The anniversary is also a reminder of an unfinished task: the establishment of a viable Palestinian state that can provide freedom and independence for the Palestinian people and deliver security for Israelis.

“The establishment of the state of Palestine is long overdue...it will enhance the stability of the region, and it will contribute to the security of the people of Israel. The peace agreement should happen, and can happen, by the end of this year. I know each leader shares that important goal, and I am committed to doing all I can to achieve it.” – *President Bush, Jerusalem, January 2008*

“We meet to lay the foundation for the establishment of a new nation -- a democratic Palestinian state that will live side by side with Israel in peace and security.” – *President Bush, Annapolis conference, November, 2007*

“I wish to say, from the bottom of my heart, that I know and acknowledge the fact that alongside the constant suffering which many in Israel have experienced because of the history, the wars, the terror and the hatred towards us – a suffering which has always been part of our lives in our land – your people have also suffered for many years, and some still suffer...I believe that there is no path other than peace. I believe that there is no just solution other than the solution of two national states for two peoples...I believe it is time. We are ready. I invite you, my friend Mahmoud Abbas, and your people, to join us in this long, tormenting and complex path, for which there is no substitute. Together we will start. Together we will arrive.” – *Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Annapolis conference, November 2007*

“I would also like to speak to the citizens of Israel on this exceptional occasion to tell them: Our neighbors on this small piece of land, neither you nor we are begging for peace from one another. Peace is a common interest of yours and ours. Peace and freedom are our rights just as peace and security are your rights and ours.” – *Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Annapolis conference, November 2007*