

September 22, 2009

**Letter in Support of a Comprehensive Middle East Peace:
An American National Interest Imperative**

We come from varied ethnic backgrounds and religious faiths that are diverse. We are Democrats and Republicans. We are veterans of war and of the struggle for peace. Together, we are all Americans.

We find common cause in supporting strong U.S. leadership to achieve a negotiated, sustainable resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict – a fundamental American interest that crosses racial, ethnic and religious lines.

We support President Obama's determination to provide sustained, hands-on diplomatic leadership to bring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to an end through the creation of two viable, secure and independent states living side by side in peace and security.

The President has made resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict a top priority since his very first day in office, and we commend his leadership. We applaud the vision the President has laid out for peace in the Middle East and the challenge he has laid down to all of us to help work for peace and a more positive future for the people of the region and the world.

This is a moment of great opportunity and urgency. After decades of tragic conflict, many Israelis and Palestinians despair of the possibility of peace. While the international community and majorities of the Israeli and Palestinian people are committed to a two-state solution as the best option for achieving peace and security, the window of opportunity is rapidly closing.

We express our support for U.S. leadership to chart a path to a better future and to the following principles:

- We support both Israel's right to exist in security and the right of the Palestinian people to a viable, sovereign and secure state of their own.
- A peace agreement will need to fulfill UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and resolve critical issues of importance to the parties including refugees, borders, Jerusalem, settlements, and security.
- The Israelis and Palestinians, however, have not – on their own – been able to reach agreement. After nearly two decades of negotiations, we believe bold American leadership can help Israelis and Palestinians make the difficult decisions necessary to achieve lasting peace and hold the parties to account should they fail to honor their commitments.
- We support the sense of real urgency that the President brings to the issue and his determination to reach a negotiated resolution to the conflict during his first term in office.

- At the appropriate time, we will support the Administration if it decides to present proposals for a just and equitable solution that provides dignity, security and sovereignty for both peoples.
- Finally, we believe a peace agreement should be comprehensive – encompassing Syria and Lebanon as well as normalization of relations between Israel and the countries of the Arab world. We support the idea of a comprehensive regional peace that builds on the Arab Peace Initiative, with its offer of recognition and normalization of relations between Israel and all Arab nations in exchange for resolution of all outstanding issues.

Both sides must take steps to move the process forward, and we support the President's efforts to end Israeli settlement growth and to halt Palestinian violence and incitement. It is now time to move to the next stage of diplomacy and to address the tough issues that must be resolved to bring this conflict to an end.

There are many who will attempt to block the path to peace. They may believe that the status quo favors their interests or that time is on their side. The President should know that we understand the status quo is unsustainable and time is of the essence. We will stand with him as he promotes a fair and just resolution to this long-standing conflict and asks all parties to make the difficult but ultimately necessary compromises for peace.

We pledge to work with the President, to forge the path to peace and security for the Middle East. We also pledge to work with those in both societies who seek peace, justice, and security, and to stand up for those who hope for a better future for themselves and for the generations that follow.

Sincerely,

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This letter reflects the opinions of the individual signatories. Institutions are listed for identification purposes only