

United States-Israel Position Paper
Personal Statement

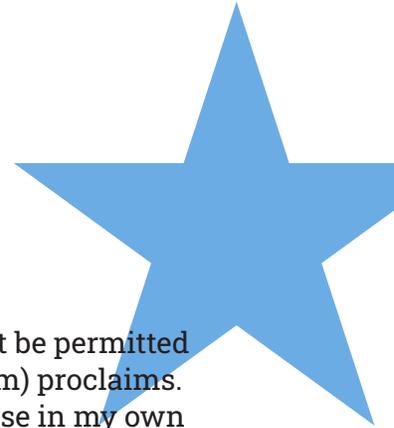
As a Member of the United States Congress, I will work to strengthen the U.S-Israel relationship – a relationship that is built on the foundation of shared values, strategic interests, and a commitment to advancing democracy in the Middle East. I will vote to approve the most tangible element of that strategic alliance: the annual appropriations bill that provides Israel with vital security assistance so that Israel can defend itself from a growing range of threats from around the region.

Many on the political left – including some Democratic members of Congress – are strident anti-Israel critics. I will oppose their misguided effort to undermine U.S. support for Israel, which only emboldens Israel’s enemies, such as Hamas and other rejectionist Palestinian organizations, and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Israel is home to members of all three Abrahamic religions, plus many adherents to more specific and unique traditions such as the Bahai and Druze. Every religion and ethnic group on earth is represented among Israel’s population, even Israel’s Jewish population is multicultural and multi-racial. Contrary to the claims of Israel’s opponents in American politics – who falsely paint Israel as a racist, xenophobic society – Israel provides a welcoming home to all of its many groups, in conjunction with its foundational ideals as the homeland of the Jewish people. This conjunction of Jewish nationhood with the ideals of democracy and civil rights was woven into Israel’s eloquent Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel from the start in 1948.

My own family is interfaith and I know that respect and tolerance for others must be practiced at home and taught to our children as a foundational value. Growing up I attended Hebrew school at B’nai Abraham synagogue in Easton, PA in preparation for my Bat-Mitzvah. I learned of the deep religious, cultural and historical roots of Zionism in Jewish civilization. This foundation stayed with me as an adult, when I began to fully understand the powerful affinity between the American way of life and the culture and values of Israel. Among these are the love of democracy, respect for the rights of minorities, and true pluralism, which resonate with the values of the United States, especially in my hometown of New York City, and in my own multicultural household.

Many on the political left would also hold Israel – and Israel alone – to conformity with an idealized model with no national identity, even while they claim that America too fails to meet those standards. In fact those purported ideals – falsely labeled “decolonization” or “antiracism” –



are a mask for antisemitism which singles out Jews as a nation that should not be permitted to be a “free people in [their] own land,” as the Hatikvah (Israel’s national anthem) proclaims. I am a Democrat and a liberal, but I do not make common cause with any of those in my own party who malign Israel for being a Jewish state, which it has a fundamental right to be.

U.S. Aid to Israel

I fully support current levels of American military and security aid to Israel (approximately \$4.3 billion) and would fight to continue that aid. The State of Israel is a strategically vital ally of the United States. Our militaries train together, and we rely on Israel for intelligence and analysis on the nuclear ambitions of Iran and the terrorist threat posed by Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, and ISIS.

Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East and is one of the most vibrant economies in the region. Israel and its people are an irreplaceable source of technological innovation, scientific research, and professional expertise for all the world. Israel’s achievements are all the more remarkable because it is also a very small nation, with historical adversaries many times its size in population and geography. For all these reasons Israel deserves and needs continued American support, which always redounds to the benefit of the United States.

The Palestinian Conflict

Too many in the Democratic Party misunderstand Israel’s conflict with the Palestinians and would withhold American support from Israel in order to influence the course of that conflict. Some – such as those who support the BDS movement – seek to destroy Israel as a Jewish state. Much of this effort is driven by the oft-repeated lie – a modern ‘blood libel’ – that Israel is an “Apartheid state” and “Zionism is Racism.” As I see it, Israel is engaged in a protracted and asymmetric war against people who have been continuously devoted – from even before Israel’s birth – to Israel’s destruction. Those forces are currently found in Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah, and throughout much of the Palestinian community. Criticism of Israel is often based on a distorted prism that sees Israel’s war of self-defense as a matter of domestic civil rights or imperial aggression. In part because Israel, through its heroic and unexpected achievements, has become the more powerful party in the Palestinian conflict, it is blamed for a lack of peace, even though the Palestinian leadership has never proposed or accepted any treaty that would allow Israel to survive as a Jewish state. Even after Israel withdrew from the Sinai after the 1977 Peace Treaty with Egypt, even after Israel withdrew unilaterally from Gaza, the Palestinian leadership still does not accept Israel’s right to exist; “land for peace” – long a slogan of the Left – has been proven to be just a slogan.



Israel is held to standards of conduct in war that are never imposed on any other state. Israel is routinely accused of war crimes, while in truth Israel's forces are the most scrupulous in the world in averting civilian casualties. For example, Israel routinely warns enemy civilians to leave buildings that it intends to attack, through phone calls or other techniques to warn a target before it is struck. No other nation engages in such life-saving tactics in the face of a murderous enemy.

Reasonable people can disagree about the wisdom and efficacy of Israel's policies with respect to settlements. American leaders can certainly issue recommendations in that regard. But I oppose any attempt to place conditions or restrictions on American aid to Israel which are designed to force Israel to adopt American ideas of how Israel should protect its own security, including the Jews who chose the West Bank as their home.

I also oppose support for the Palestinian Authority so long as it refuses to accept Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state, supports the families of terrorists, and teaches hatred of Israel and Jews in their schools. Of course, I would oppose any effort to recognize a State of Palestine absent a treaty between Israel and the Palestinians.

The Iranian Threat

There can be no agreement with Iran that threatens the security of Israel or the United States. I did not agree with the Obama administration's adoption of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and I do not agree with the current administration's efforts to revive it. Iran has been in a state of continuous enmity against America and Israel for 43 years, since its Islamic revolution and the American hostage crisis that followed it. Iran routinely proclaims its hatred of America and Israel, and celebrates annually with crowds chanting death threats against both nations, which are always maligned together in one breath by the Iranian leadership. Iran is a state sponsor of terrorism that engages in frequent attacks – through its proxies and directly – against Israel and other nations in the region.

Iran cannot be allowed to become a nuclear power, and I will support all efforts to prevent that from becoming a reality. Iran has been spinning advanced centrifuges, amassing fissile material, and is creating all of the precursors of a military nuclear program that will result in the Islamic Republic becoming a nuclear-armed terrorists state. Iran had worked on a nuclear weapon prior to 2002 and the know-how still resides in the country. The United States must leave all options – including military options – to deter Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. Israel's efforts to stop Iran should be applauded.



The Iranian threat is even more significant now in light of the escalating threat of war with both Russia and China. Russia is engaged in a campaign of horrific atrocities and war crimes against Ukraine, and shows every sign of challenging NATO security in Europe if it succeeds against Ukraine. Iran is one of Russia's few allies; it is a member of Russia's regional military alliance and engages in joint support with Russia of the Syrian government, another terrorist state and enemy of Israel. Iran regularly engages in joint naval exercises with China and Russia, and in March 2021, Iran signed a 25 year cooperation agreement with China. It would be foolish to enrich and strengthen Iran when it makes common cause with America's most dangerous adversaries.

Middle East Diplomacy

The United States should encourage the recent diplomatic achievements that have led to normalization of relations between Israel and many Arab states. I applaud the Israel Relations Normalization Act, adopted to support the historic agreements between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan through the Abraham Accords. There are encouraging signs that this trend is gaining momentum, and America should use its influence with allies such as Saudi Arabia to follow suit. America must work towards establishing diplomatic and economic ties between Israel and its neighbors, who are also adversaries to Iran and friends to the United States.

Jerusalem

I unequivocally applaud the long overdue American recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the movement of the American embassy to Israel's capital. I oppose moves by the Biden administration to renew diplomatic relations with the Palestinians in Jerusalem which disregards that Jerusalem is the territory of Israel. Ramallah is the capital of the Palestinian Authority, and any American diplomatic relations with the Palestinian Authority should be based there.

Conclusion

Support for Israel has been one of the great moral issues of the last 75 years. If elected, I look forward to working with my fellow representatives of both parties to protect the vital mutual interests of the United States and Israel, and supporting the close cultural, technological, and economic cooperation between our two nations.