

OPEN LETTER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why should I sign the Open Letter?

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has become an ever-widening spiral of violence and suffering. Lives are being lost. Something must happen—and happen soon—to bring this cycle to a halt and to reverse it in the direction of constructive progress towards a peaceful negotiated solution. This is why Brit Tzedek v'Shalom supports the Open Letter from American Jews to the Next President which calls on the next president to appoint during the first 100 days of his new term, an internationally respected envoy at the highest level to focus on bringing a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The United States has historically played a pivotal role in facilitating communication and bridging the differences between Israelis and Palestinians in order to bring them to the negotiating table.

By joining other American Jews in signing the Open Letter you will strengthen the voice of the majority of American Jews who, as consistently demonstrated by polls, support a negotiated, two-state resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Collectively these signatures will provide the next President with the political leverage necessary to vigorously reengage the U.S. in the active pursuit of a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Please stand with us and be counted by signing the Open Letter today.

What role has the US government played in past negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbors and with the Palestinians?

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| 1970's | Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (under Presidents Nixon and Ford) negotiated disengagement agreements between Israel, Syria, and Egypt. |
| 1979 | President Carter personally brokered the Camp David peace treaty between Israel and Egypt - including clauses that established the precedent for supporting Palestinian autonomy. |
| 1988 | President Reagan proposed several peace plans and opened an unprecedented dialogue between the U.S. and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). |
| 1991 | The first President Bush convened the Madrid Conference, which served as an international framework for the Oslo peace process. |
| 1994 | President Clinton personally brokered the 1994 Israel- Jordan Peace deal. |
| 1998 | President Clinton personally brokered the 1998 Wye Accords between the Israelis and Palestinians. |

2000-1 President Clinton mediated bilateral negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians at Camp David and Taba.

2003 The second President Bush formalized the American commitment to a two-state solution through his Administration's formulation of the Road Map to Peace, in which the U.S. was joined by the European Union, Russia and the United Nations.

What does the Open Letter call on the President to do?

- We ask the next President to make the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations a top priority.
- We ask that the next President, within the first 100 days of the new administration, appoint a special envoy of international stature empowered in all ways to bring the two sides to the negotiating table.
- We are asking the president to actively pursue the full implementation of the disengagement plan as a first step. This withdrawal will facilitate the return of the Israelis and Palestinians to the negotiating table to reach a viable and just resolution to the conflict.

Could the appointment of an envoy really make a difference?

Yes, it can. With a full-time envoy, empowered with the authority to speak on the President's behalf, our Administration can once again seize the moment, moving the parties towards cooperation and negotiations for peace. With enough persistence, influence, and strong public support, an envoy can serve effectively as a broker to bridge the gaps between the parties.

Why is your letter to the next president, rather than to the current presidential candidates?

During such a close presidential election campaign we believe it is unlikely that the Bush administration will launch a new Middle East peace initiative prior to the election or that Senator Kerry will stake out a bold position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at odds with the current administration policy. The time to influence the formation of U.S. foreign policy is after the election, when the next President will be formulating initiatives for the first 100 days of this term.

Is there a credible partner for peace negotiations among the Palestinians?

The Palestinian Authority is internationally recognized as the sole representative of the Palestinian people and is thus the entity with which Israel must negotiate. As part of the negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, it is critical that significant focus is placed on

drawing up strong and specific security arrangements, in addition to providing a detailed plan for enforcing them. It is not a matter of trust, but of reaching a viable and enforceable agreement that will become law and thus supersede the power of any one leader.

If negotiations are to resume in earnest, the potential tangible benefits of peace to the Palestinian populace would likely strengthen the forces of moderation and hasten emergence of leadership therein. But time is not on our side-the longer the current 'war' continues the greater the support for Palestinian extremists, Hamas in particular.

Peace-making is an inherently risky undertaking because, by definition, one makes peace with one's enemies. Although we have come to take for granted the endurance of the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt which has never once been violated, prior to the signing at Camp David, Egypt was considered a dangerous enemy, against whom Israel had fought four bloody wars. Undeniably, the acceptance of this peace treaty entailed great risk and sacrifice for both parties, but has proved well worth it. Likewise, the value of taking a risk in resuming negotiations outweighs that of indefinitely perpetuating the current cycle of violence between Israelis and Palestinians.

Can a grassroots petition campaign really affect U.S. foreign policy?

Yes, if we are serious about affecting U.S. foreign policy we must demonstrate our influence through our numbers. Tens of thousands of signatures in support of our Open Letter will show our next President that there is a deep desire among American Jews for the U.S. to actively promote a negotiated solution to the conflict in the Middle East. Please add your voice to the call for peace.

What will be done with the Open Letter once the signatures have been collected?

The Open Letter will be presented to the new President within the formative first 100 days of his administration. We are also hoping to raise sufficient funds to place an advertisement of the letter in the New York Times and other media outlets.