



Talking Points Israel 2024-2025

General Talking Points:

- As a movement, our love of Israel stems from the millennia of Jewish connection to the land and understanding that the destinies of diasporic Jews and Israeli Jews are intertwined.
- We are devastated by Hamas's attacks carried out on October 7, 2023, and the resulting war that affects Israelis and Palestinians alike. The Reform Movement supports Israel's right to defend itself in accordance with international law and is focused on securing the release of hostages, reducing innocent civilian casualties, and ensuring humanitarian aid reaches the people of Gaza.
- We echo the voices of the hostages' family members who believe that a new, negotiated ceasefire is the most effective way for those still held to be freed. We welcomed President Biden's May 2024 proposal towards a ceasefire and have urged the Israeli government to reach a successful negotiation that prioritizes the return of the remaining hostages.
- On October 7, 2023, Hamas terrorists infiltrated Israel by air, land, and sea, killing more than 1,200 Israelis and taking 250 hostages, including women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. This was the single bloodiest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust. In response to this attack, Israel launched a war against Hamas, carried out through air attacks and a ground invasion of Gaza. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, fighting in Gaza has killed over 44,000 Palestinians and displaced almost two million people, drawing heavy international criticism.
- Currently 100 hostages – both alive and dead – continue to be held hostage by Hamas.
- Reports from hostages released and rescued revealed that those in captivity suffer deplorable conditions, including sexual and physical violence, psychological torture, and near-starvation. We continue to call for an urgent response to this prolonged hostage crisis.
- The U.S. has an important role to play in facilitating peace negotiations and applying pressure to ensure the release of hostages held by Hamas.
- The Reform Movement believes **peace is essential for Israel's security and well-being**. A two-state solution, one Jewish state, one Palestinian state, is necessary for lasting peace in the Middle East. We lift the vision of the biblical Prophets and Jewish sages who consider pursuing peace as a religious obligation.
- The Reform Movement is deeply opposed to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, to the expansion of settlements in the West Bank, and to the oppressive treatment of the Palestinian population. The URJ is also deeply concerned about recent rhetoric regarding the re-

occupation of Gaza, and strongly opposes any language or action in pursuit of this goal.

- We also lift our voice to express concern and even opposition to Israeli policies and/or voices that run counter to our values of peace and justice. When we have concerns, they are rooted in love and a desire to sustain Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.
- U.S. humanitarian aid to Palestinians is essential to fighting not just the devastating impact of the current war, but to long-term investment in Palestinian civil society. Such aid must not be diverted into the hands of terrorists, including Hamas. Millions of Palestinians in Gaza are facing desperate conditions including forced displacement, food insecurity, and a lack of shelter and medical care. It is critical that adequate funding is provided to allow Palestinians access to life-saving humanitarian aid. The U.S. has provided over \$1 billion in humanitarian assistance since October 2023.
- Hamas and Hezbollah threaten the security and existence of Israel, as shown on October 7 and in the resulting war. Israel also faces real threats from Iran as demonstrated by a series of missile and drone attacks in the past year. This necessitates continuous Israeli investment in its security; as a result, Israel spends a higher percentage of its GDP on security than any other industrialized country in the world. U.S. foreign assistance to Israel is an important investment that advances U.S. interests in the Middle East.
- U.S. and Israeli officials reached a new military assistance agreement in September 2016, known as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The total value of the new MOU, which covers fiscal years (FY) 2019 to 2028, is \$38 billion, or \$3.8 billion each year (\$3.3 billion in foreign military financing and \$500 million for cooperative programs for missile defense).
- In March 2022, as part of the omnibus spending package, Congress authorized \$1 billion in Iron Dome funding. The Iron Dome helps ensure the safety of Israeli Jews, Palestinian citizens of Israel, Bedouins, and Palestinians in the West Bank. Iron Dome is even more essential since the October 7 attack.
- Across various assistance agreements, the United States has spent an estimated \$17.9 billion on military aid to Israel from October 2023 to October 2024 (Costs of War Project at Brown University).

Jewish Values

- The Talmud teaches us that whoever saves a single life is considered to “have saved the whole world” (Sanhedrin 37a). Because we are created in God’s image, as Jews we believe that every human life should be honored and protected as if it were an entire world.
- As Jews, we are guided by the principle that “The world is sustained by three things, by justice, by truth, and by peace” (Rabbi Shimon Ben Gamliel, Pirkei Avot).
- Our Jewish values teach us to pursue the sacred mitzvah of Pidyon Shvu’im, the redemption of captives (Bava Batra 8b).
- Our tradition teaches that we have an obligation to “Seek peace and pursue it” (Psalms 34:14).

- We have a duty to work for a meaningful lasting peace agreement. We are taught, “Zion will only be redeemed through justice and those who return to her through acts of righteousness” (Isaiah 1:27).
- “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem” (Psalm 122).

Legislative Asks

In the HOUSE and the SENATE:

- 1. Encourage U.S. leadership to support a new, negotiated ceasefire that guarantees the release of all those held hostage in Gaza.**
 - Over a year into the war, 100 individuals – both alive and dead – continue to be held hostage by Hamas facing dire circumstances including sexual and physical violence, psychological torture, and near-starvation.
 - The release of all the hostages is essential to ensure a quick end to the war.
 - **THE ASK:** I urge you to work with the international community in demanding a new negotiated ceasefire that includes the release of all hostages being held in Gaza.
- 2. Encourage foreign aid to Israel and sustained humanitarian aid to Palestinians.**
 - The U.S. and Israel’s most recent Memorandum of Understanding lasts from fiscal years 2019-2028 and provides \$38 billion total, or \$3.8 billion a year. Each year, Israel will receive \$3.3 billion in Foreign Military Financing and \$500 million for cooperative programs for missile defense. Congress must continue to appropriate (provide) this money each year.
 - Especially since Hamas’s October 7th attack and the resulting war, the United States’ support for Israel’s efforts to destroy Hamas’s military capabilities has been vital. Israel needs continued American steadfastness, and we are encouraged that the U.S. has also worked to deter Iran and Hezbollah from widening the conflict. Hamas’s brutal actions threaten the safety of both Israelis and Palestinians, as well as U.S. interests in a stable Middle East.
 - U.S. humanitarian aid to Palestinians is important because it enhances access to food, water, shelter, and health care as millions of Palestinians in Gaza are facing desperate conditions including forced displacement, food insecurity, and a lack of shelter and medical care. The U.S. has provided over \$1 billion in humanitarian assistance for Palestinians since October 2023.
 - In late September 2024, the U.S. authorized \$336 million in humanitarian assistance to support Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank to address the more than 1.9 million Palestinians displaced from their homes and more than 2.1 million facing acute food insecurity (USAID).
 - **THE ASK:** I urge you to continue to support foreign aid to Israel as a demonstration of American support for Israel’s security. Aid is also a long-term investment in U.S. leadership and interests in the Middle East. I urge you to also continue to support humanitarian aid to the Palestinians as a demonstration of American support for Palestinian needs during this time and as a long-term investment in the peace process.
- 3. Encourage United States involvement in peace negotiations.**
 - A two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the best way to ensure Israeli security and that Israel maintains its status as a Jewish and democratic state. It also

would bring an end to the occupation and to the oppressive treatment of the Palestinian population.

- Supporting two-states for two peoples is in line with resolutions previously passed by Congress and represents the only viable option for Middle East peace.
- The time to act is now. We must have viable post-war solutions for the region, and if we wait too long, a two-state solution will no longer be practicable.
- **THE ASK:** I urge you to support active and sustained U.S. involvement in achieving a viable two-state solution for the Israelis and the Palestinians.