



LA Jews for Peace

Statement on Gaza

January 29, 2009

LA Jews for Peace urges the United States to work with the Egyptians, French, and others to facilitate a long-term cease-fire between Israel and Hamas. A long-term truce is the essential first step to bring peace, security, and prosperity to the Israeli and Palestinian people. Escalating mutual hostility, invasion, and withdrawal without security arrangements does not work, and does not bring security to either side – it merely causes human suffering and death.

Already Israel and Hamas have each proposed longer truces. The first two steps will be for: (1) Israel to open the Gaza crossings, and (2) Hamas to stop smuggling through tunnels between Gaza and Egypt. The crossings must be opened first because the tunnels are the only source of food and everyday necessities for the 1.5 million people living in the Gaza Strip. Only after the crossings are open, can Hamas close the tunnels.

Israel must comply with UN Security Council Resolution 1860, which calls for "unimpeded provision and distribution throughout Gaza of humanitarian assistance, including of food, fuel and medical treatment." Israel must end its blockade of the Gaza Strip, which is an illegal form of collective punishment.

LA Jews for Peace urges the establishment of an international force on the Gaza-Israel border to prevent cross-border attacks and other violations of the cease-fire. And if such attacks do occur, to be an independent observer of who did what and when they did it.

LA Jews for Peace commends President Barack Obama for quickly asserting US leadership in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We implore him to follow through on his Jan. 22 remarks when he said, "As part of a

lasting cease-fire, Gaza's border crossings should be open to allow the flow of aid and commerce."

LA Jews for Peace applauds the appointment of Senator George Mitchell as the President's envoy to the region. Mitchell made peace in Northern Ireland by dealing with the hard-liners on both sides. He should follow that example in Israel-Palestine, which means recognizing that Hamas was elected, is the governing authority in the Gaza Strip, and cannot be isolated.

Helping the Palestinians form a unity government should be an early priority. The present animosity between the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip hurts the Palestinian cause and makes negotiations with Israel impossible.

Gaza must be reconstructed quickly. The recent war caused \$2 billion worth of damage, destroyed 21,000 buildings including many public and civil structures, and demolished the region's infrastructure. **LA Jews for Peace** recommends that, for the reconstruction to be efficient, Hamas should be a major player. Not only does Hamas have a reputation for being efficient and free of corruption, it is the controlling authority on the ground.

Friends of Israel should remember that Israel's only hope for survival as a secure and democratic Jewish homeland lies in a negotiated peace agreement with the Palestinians, not with a short-lived military victory. Eventually Israel will have to talk to the people it bombed yesterday, and is blockading today, and make compromises for peace.

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