



# MIKE SIEGEL

FOR CONGRESS  FOR TEXAS

## ISRAEL POSITION PAPER

### **My Approach**

As a Member of Congress, my job will be to make sure the United States is an effective and strategic broker in Israel and the Middle East, and to support democracy, human rights, and international diplomacy.

I want a just and enduring peace in Israel. Unilateral action is not the way forward. The Trump Administration has severely curtailed the United States' capacity and credibility to push forward any sort of peace process. And I think that is the goal: Trump is not interested in collaboration or human rights; he has made a strategic choice to align himself with far-right wing, theological conservatives, who have an "end game" in Israel based on their reading of the Book of Revelations. The Trump/Christian Right strategy is not in the interests of peace or prosperity in the region; it is crass and self-interested, heedless of the consequences of continued conflict.

I see the Israeli people as my people, who deserve safety and security. I see the Palestinian people as my people, who deserve safety and security. I want to see all interested parties at the negotiating table. And I want the United States to have the credibility and international standing to support a successful resolution of the conflict.

### **My Background**

My position on Israel is influenced by my Jewish ancestry. On my dad's side, we are Belarusian Jews, via a small rural community outside of Minsk. Unfortunately, most of us did not survive the Holocaust, in part because countries like the United States rejected Jewish people seeking refuge. To many in our family, Israel represents the sanctuary that other nations refused to provide.

Growing up, my family emphasized our commitment to social justice and human rights for all. The idea that we might be doing okay, with a roof over our heads and economic stability, but it is our job to fight for the community, to make sure that everyone has what they need. I later learned that this is one of the central tenets of Reform Judaism, a tradition we see ourselves in.

I attended Brandeis University and gained further insight into Jewish traditions of social justice. I was a freshman at Brandeis when Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated; unfortunately, that seems to be the moment when our best prospects for a peace agreement were lost. I later became a public school teacher, and taught diverse students in Texas, California and New York. I was in New York, teaching middle school, during the 9/11 attacks. I saw how a moment of international unity was turned into a drumbeat for war, and an excuse to demonize people from Muslim traditions. I later became a lawyer to fight for civil and human rights, and social justice for all.



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## **The US-Israel Relationship**

Israel is an essential partner for the United States in the Middle East.

I respect the special relationship and alliance forged between the U.S. and Israel over the last seven decades, and the legacy of U.S. leadership in brokering peace between Israel and its neighbors.

As a member of Congress, I will work to strengthen the bonds between our two countries and rebuild the United States' tradition of leadership in this critical region.

## **Israeli Security and Foreign Aid**

Israel has a right to self-defense. Israelis have a right to live in safety, security and peace, free from terrorist attacks. I support bilateral efforts to enhance Israeli security. I support continued aid to Israel.

I also support renewing aid to the Palestinian people and to the UN agencies that serve Palestinian refugees. These funds have encouraged historic cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian security officials in the West Bank, while preventing violence and promoting stability.

## **Two-State Solution**

The U.S. has a unique responsibility to work with Israelis and Palestinians, as well as regional and international partners, to reach a peaceful end to hostilities and arrive at a two-state solution. Such a resolution will protect Israel's identity as a democracy and Jewish homeland, while fulfilling the aspirations of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Failing to reach such a deal represents an existential threat to Israel. Brokering an agreement with borders based on the 1967 lines with equivalent land swaps—and a capital in Jerusalem for both states—will safeguard Israel by providing for an internationally recognized border with a future state of Palestine.

Further, a two-state agreement will enhance Israel's relationships with its allies and promote security in the region.

I oppose unilateral actions that obstruct the path toward two states on either side of the conflict. I will speak out against the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and related demolitions and forced relocations of Palestinians. I oppose hateful rhetoric by Palestinian leaders and will speak out against any terrorist action.



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## Iran

The acquisition of nuclear weapons by Iran would constitute a serious threat to Israel, the region and the world. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action effectively blocked Iran's pathway to a nuclear weapon and allowed the U.S. and allies to deal with Iran's other malign behavior without the threat of a nuclear weapon. President Trump abandoned the JCPOA without any valid basis. His decision was an unprovoked and unjustified assault on international peace and security that may put us on a path to a costly and bloody war of choice against Iran.

I support the JCPOA. I am committed to bringing the United States back into compliance with the terms of the agreement. I support efforts in Congress to clarify that the President is not authorized to engage in military operations against Iran.