



Sue Altman Israel Position Paper

The U.S.-Israel Relationship

In 2010, a friend and I embarked on a two-week bike trip across Israel. We biked to Nazareth, Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee, over to the coast via Haifa (besides Jerusalem, this was my personal favorite, what a beautiful city); then down the coast to Netanya, into Be'er-Sheva, and then Ein Gedi by the Dead Sea. We spent several days in Jerusalem, visiting the Western Wall, meeting with locals in shops and restaurants, and learning about its millennia-long history. We also spent a somber, emotional day at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial museum. I was a high school history teacher at the time and much of my Western Civilizations history class centered on educating my students on the origins of conflict and hate and their duty as the next generation to never turn their backs on others in their times of need. After my visit to Yad Vashem, I revamped my curriculum using resources gathered during my visit.

My journey to Israel did more than help me become a better teacher. It also provided me with an emotional and empathic context to understand Israel's plight and complement the academic exercise I had already embarked on. The rest of the world turned a blind eye to a prosecuted group in a time of desperate need, a grave mistake that we cannot allow to repeat itself. My career in education and in local and state politics did not directly engage with contemporary policy questions about the U.S.- Israel alliance. However, I am guided by my values of cooperation and human rights, and my time in Israel that had an indelible effect on my understanding of the historical plight of the Jewish people and the importance of maintaining a strong alliance with Israel. As the next Congresswoman for New Jersey's seventh district, my actions will be shaped by my firm belief in Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state and a desire to make conditions on the ground conducive to diplomacy, which is the only viable path to peace in the region. I will be a vocal advocate for building and maintaining connective tissue between our countries through economic aid and diplomatic cooperation. As someone whose career has focused on pro-democracy and anti-corruption work, I will be a powerful voice in Congress on threats to democracy both at home and abroad.

I will also speak out against policies like BDS that only serve to weaken vital channels of communication, hinder good-faith diplomatic engagement necessary for peace, and undermine U.S. interests in the region. In fact, I opposed BDS throughout my career in New Jersey

politics because its origins are rooted in an attempt to undermine the Jewish state. In addition to its deleterious diplomatic impacts, BDS threatens the vital economic ties between the U.S. in Israel that are a key pillar of our alliance. Bilateral trade between Israel and New Jersey has reached \$1.72 billion annually and my district is enriched by Israeli companies' record of innovation in spaces like healthcare and financial technology.

Israeli Security and Human Rights

My time in Israel made it clear that it is a geographically tiny country, just about the size of New Jersey, and faces threats of terrorism and unfriendly neighbors like Iran that deny its basic right to exist. The United States and Israel have a long-standing alliance that includes military aid to Israel. I support continued aid, without additional political conditions, in the framework of President Obama's [Memo of Understanding](#) with Israel, which represented the largest pledge of military aid in the history of the alliance and ensured that these funds are spent supporting U.S. industry.

In addition to military aid, the United States must use its status on a leader on the global stage to work with Israel and its neighbors to normalize diplomatic relations. To that end, I support the Abraham Accords and efforts currently underway in Congress to establish a special envoy to the Abraham Accords to further cultivate conversations between Israel and the Arab League nations involved in the agreement.

One of my top priorities is keeping both Israelis and Palestinians safe and making sure that basic human rights are upheld on both sides. Civilians must never be seen as collateral damage in the conflict, and I support tools like the Iron Dome in order to protect civilian lives. Moreover, conditions in the West Bank are concerning, and the United States must use its influence to direct humanitarian aid to the Palestinians and relevant agencies in the United Nations. Ultimately, poor living conditions are an impediment to the peace process.

Two-State Solution

The only long-term solution that results in a peaceful resolution to the conflict is a two-state solution. Both Israelis and Palestinians have a fundamental right to self-determination and deserve to live in dignity and peace.

The United States has an obligation to not only facilitate these negotiations but ensure that conditions on the ground are conducive to such diplomatic efforts. The U.S. must maintain aid to Israel including the Iron Dome, which is critical in ensuring that rockets fired into civilian areas do not risk casualties. Moreover, without an adequate defense mechanism to protect civilians, a ground invasion is more likely. We must also denounce terrorism in all its forms,

which is why I support the Taylor Force Act. I will also use my voice in congress to speak out against groups like Hamas who engage in violent terrorism and incendiary and antisemitic rhetoric. Lastly, I believe that the Palestinian Authority must better represent the will of its people so that Israel has a credible negotiating partner.

We cannot understand why previous efforts at brokering a two-state solution have failed without acknowledging the role that inhumane conditions play in hindering good-faith negotiating. I share President Biden's opposition to further expansion of settlements in the West Bank and destruction of private homes – there is no path to a two-state solution if Palestinians cannot see a credible vision for a homeland. The right to a home, freedom of movement, and access to food and clean water are all fundamental human rights and must be maintained if we are to achieve lasting peace.

Iran

Iran is a nefarious actor that commits human rights abuses against its own citizens, espouses antisemitism, and undermines global peace through its funding of terrorist groups like Hezbollah. We must take a multi-faceted approach to confronting the grave threat it poses. First, I am inspired by the brave women who stood up after the death of Mahsa Amini and, as we approach the one- year anniversary of protests, I am alarmed by Iran's recent arrests of a dozen activists, almost all of them women. In Congress, I will fight to make sure that our government has the backs of these fearless Iranians. Moreover, Iran cannot under any circumstances be able to acquire nuclear weapons, as this would represent an existential threat to Israel as a Jewish homeland and to global safety more broadly. While all options have to be on the table, in Congress I will emphasize a diplomacy-first approach that works to keep Israel safe without any bloodshed.

Addendum

The issues in the Middle East, involving Israelis and Palestinians, as well as global players that include Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Iran, Lebanon, as well as Russia, are complex and significant to the entire globe. They are also testing the strength and durability of US leadership.

Before I begin a summary of my current position regarding the Israel-Hamas war, I want to state some principles:

- 1) I support the existence of the State of Israel, I believe that Israel is a vital friend and ally of the United States, and I believe that Israel's existence, and the safety of the Jewish people is in danger from many forces throughout the Middle East and globally, including hateful forces within the US. A nation has a right and an obligation to respond when attacked, and has a vested duty to ensure its people are safe. I am deeply concerned that the attacks on Israel have intensified the always-present hatred that is anti-Semitism, in the United States and abroad. Despite making up approximately just 2.4% of the US population, American Jews are the victims of over 60% of all religious hate crimes. Anti-Semitism is rearing its ugly head in this country, and Jewish people are rightly afraid, and there must be no tolerance for this. At all. Ever.
- 2) Hamas is a terrorist organization and must be dismantled. The people responsible for the attacks on October 7 must be held accountable. The violence seen on October 7 is incomprehensible — the murder of innocent civilians and violence against women—including sexual violence—is an atrocity. There is no path to peace as long as Hamas continues to exist and the elimination of Hamas as a threat to Israel is a crucial part in the peace process.
- 3) I support a two-state solution, which is the most humane solution for lasting peace in this region. I support Palestinian self-determination in Gaza and the West Bank, and believe that the expansion of settlements into the West Bank have historically been an impediment to the peace process. I support the Israeli peace and democracy movement that has advocated against settlement expansion and against anti-democratic judicial reforms proposed by Netanyahu's government.

Regarding the current situation in Israel and Gaza, I believe the United States must help to create worldwide pressure for the release of the hostages held by Hamas. There are still many hostages being held by Hamas, and I hope by the time you read this that the number is lower than it is now and that families have been reunited. Getting the hostages home must be a priority for the global community. The world cannot forget these people. As the Biden Administration has stated, there should also be continued humanitarian pauses to provide aid and assistance to innocent civilians — and that aid must reach Palestinians who are in need,

without being diverted and stolen by Hamas, which often occurs. These humanitarian pauses must be honored by both Hamas and Israel, and innocent people must be allowed to seek safety. Neither Israelis nor Palestinians can ever live in peace so long as an armed and funded Hamas exists safely inside Gaza, and we must allow innocent civilians a chance to save themselves and their children. It is crucial that Hamas also works to protect innocent lives in this conflict.

The US must continue aid to Israel and I support the aid package put forth by President Biden. House Republicans have no business playing some JV game of politics where they attempt to pit international aid against crucial domestic offsets, such as the Speaker's recent suggestion that the aid to Israel and Ukraine should be paid for by cuts to the IRS. Gimmicks like these are deeply irresponsible, terrible domestic policy, betray US leadership abroad, and speak to the Speaker's lack of experience and knowledge, not to mention morals and priorities.

As we continue to support Israel, we must do everything in our power to ensure that civilian casualties are minimized, and I support the Biden Administration in their efforts to ensure that Israel takes every feasible measure to minimize civilian casualties when fighting in Gaza. Israel must cooperate with world leaders, allies and United Nations efforts to maintain food and water for civilians and to provide safe passage for innocent civilians. The civilian death toll is nearly incomprehensible and is absolutely horrific, particularly given that half of the souls in Gaza are children. We must also have no tolerance for anti-Muslim bias, racism, hate crimes or fear-mongering here in the US.

World leaders and allies must take this tragedy and dangerous situation and create renewed pressure for a two state solution. The lives of Israelis and Palestinians depend upon careful, thoughtful, and humanitarian action. I support the Biden Administration's efforts to prevent regional escalation and support multilateral peace efforts across the region.

When I am in Congress, I will work tirelessly for the rights of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples to live in peace, and I will always be thoughtful, deliberate and intentional about my positions on crises, especially those which are complex, deeply tragic, and shake us to the core.