

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama,

As you prepare to host leaders from the Middle East and to make a major address in Egypt in the coming weeks, we write to support the course you are charting for American policy in the Middle East. Specifically, we applaud your intention to provide strong American leadership to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian and broader Arab-Israeli conflicts.

Resolving these conflicts, and in particular, finally implementing a two-state solution, is essential for American interests in the Middle East and around the world. Many of America's critical national goals – from addressing Iran and withdrawing from Iraq to defeating Al-Qaeda and pushing back against extremism – will be well-served by addressing this core issue, not to mention the positive impact it will have on our standing around the world.

We share your conviction that a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an essential cornerstone of Middle East stability. As friends of Israel, we believe that an end to the conflict is critical to Israel's long-term security and survival as a Jewish and a democratic state, and we are steadfastly committed to its realization. We also believe that America best serves our historic friendship with Israel when it is actively working to de-escalate conflict and advance peace, and that our relationships throughout the Arab and Muslim world will be strengthened through a negotiated agreement that ends the conflict.

However, demographic trends, continued violence, settlements, escalating tensions in Jerusalem, and other changes on the ground all threaten the window of opportunity for the two-state solution. From the first day of your administration, you recognized the urgency of the situation and made pursuit of peace in the Middle East a priority.

Unfortunately, Israelis and Palestinians have not been able to achieve peace on their own, and we therefore share your belief that American leadership is essential to achieving meaningful progress. Left to themselves, the parties have been unable to make the necessary progress toward ending the conflict, and an American helping hand is now needed to bridge those gaps. The appointments of Senator Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State and former Senator George Mitchell as Special Envoy, both of which we strongly commend, sent the powerful message that you recognized the need for immediate engagement in the region.

It is also important to note that building Palestinian capacity in the economic and security sectors and building transparent institutions of self-governance are important goals, deserving of American support and central to the future success of a Palestinian state. Rather than preconditions for statehood, these are goals that can be effectively realized over time once a Palestinian state has been created, with extensive international assistance, involvement, and oversight particularly in the security arena.

Finally, we believe that strong consideration should be given to pursuing a regional, comprehensive approach to resolving the conflict, such as the Arab Peace Initiative. This would guarantee the full recognition of Israel and normal relations between Israel and the Arab and Muslim countries – from Indonesia to Morocco – including all twenty-two Arab states.

Peace between Israel and all its neighbors is a paramount interest of the United States, Israel, and the Arab world. We thank you for the efforts you have made so far to achieve it, and we stand ready to support you in pursuit of this challenging goal.