

American Jewish Committee Position Statement on the Middle East

The American Jewish Committee believes that in the aftermath of the war in Lebanon and with continuing efforts by our government to encourage the parties to the conflict to resolve outstanding issues, it should set forth the positions it supports on some of the current issues in the quest for peace in the Middle East.

The American Jewish Committee has previously issued statements regarding the status of Jerusalem, which must remain undivided and be recognized as the capital of Israel. We have repeatedly called attention to the terrorist activities of the Palestine Liberation Organization which threaten not only Israel, but the rest of the civilized world. We therefore support the position of our Government that the United States will not recognize or negotiate with the PLO so long as it "does not recognize Israel's right to exist and does not accept Security Council Resolution 242 and 338."

Israel is a force for democracy in the Middle

East, a staunch ally of the United States that shares our common values and has demonstrated a willingness to make sacrifices in defense of those values. We believe, therefore, that Israel's independence and security merit our full support and that of our government.

Thirty years after the creation of the State of Israel and after four wars between Israel and her Arab neighbors, the United States, Israel and Egypt agreed at Camp David on a framework for peace in the Middle East. This led to the signing of a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. Israel exchanged territory, oil, bases and settlements for peace and the hope of normal relations with Egypt. This peace process must now be strengthened by the further extension of normal relations between the two countries. Egypt should further the peace process by implementing full diplomatic, business and tourist relations with Israel.

In other respects the Camp David frame-

work remains unfulfilled. The Camp David accords called on Israel, Egypt and Jordan and the Arab inhabitants in the West Bank and Gaza to proceed with negotiations on the future status of these areas. The refusal of Jordan and the Palestinian representatives to participate in such negotiations has been the major impediment to achieving the broader peace foreseen at Camp David.

The American Jewish Committee believes that the United States can be helpful in the peace process by using its good offices to foster the primary objectives of direct negotiations between Israel and its neighbors. In so doing, the United States should refrain from applying unilateral pressure on Israel and should not slow down or stop the shipment of military equipment to Israel, our most important strategic ally in the Middle East.

Last September President Reagan called for a "fresh start" toward achieving an Arab-Israeli peace. In his initiative the President went beyond the terms of the Camp David accords and set forth specific new American positions on the composition of the peace terms. The American Jewish Committee supports many elements in the Reagan plan although it is opposed to certain aspects and has been critical of the manner in which it was announced, without adequate prior consultation with Israel. The American Jewish Committee believes that the Camp David principles must remain the framework for reaching a just, comprehensive and durable settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The American Jewish Committee calls upon Jordan and the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza to join in direct negotiations, as called for in the Camp David accords. The American Jewish Committee is confident that an expression of willingness on the part of Jordan to commence negotiations -- with or without participation by the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank -- would be met by Israeli flexibility and willingness to make the necessary compromises to achieve peace, consistent with its security needs. Jordan, too, would be expected to make compromises. Therefore, no party should set preconditions to the negotiations envisaged at Camp David, for they serve only to delay their commencement.

The American Jewish Committee believes that U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 embraced in the Camp David accords, as applied to the West Bank and Gaza, ought to lead to territorial compromise through negotiations and to full peace between Israel and her neighbors. As negotiations commence, we can expect the parties to place maximal positions on the table including their respective claims to sovereignty. These positions will have to be compromised in the course of such negotiations. Therefore, we view acts by Israel which could limit the flexibility necessary to enable the parties to reach agreement on the future status of the areas as being unhelpful to the peace process. Moreover, the American Jewish Committee shares the concerns of many Israelis that the continuing and indefinite Israeli administration of the West Bank and Gaza, with governance over the lives of more than a million Arabs who are not citizens of Israel, could in the course of time undermine the democratic and humane principles of the State of Israel.

The American Jewish Committee believes that in the absence of negotiations concerning the West Bank and Gaza, it may well be that Israel's current settlement policy, if continued, may make withdrawal at a later date no longer a viable option for any Israeli government. There is an urgent need, therefore, for Jordan to enter

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