

# LA Jews for Peace Policy Statement

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## Renewed Crisis in Israel-Palestine as Ceasefire Totters

Israel-Palestine was plunged into the current crisis by a new demand from Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu followed by an aggressive Hamas response. Together these actions put the ceasefire at risk of collapse, even before phase 1 is completed. To further complicate matters, Netanyahu and U.S. President Trump, in a coordinated reaction to Hamas' response, threatened to renew the war on Saturday. Here is what happened

First Netanyahu's demanded that Hamas leave Gaza before phase 2 negotiations start. But that demand essentially stops any negotiation for phase 2 because it puts Hamas, the party Israel must negotiate with, out of the picture. Then Hamas reacted by postponing all hostage-prisoner exchanges "until further notice," accusing Israel of breaking the ceasefire deal. Even in this crisis, Hamas' armed wing spokesperson Abu Obeida said, "We affirm our commitment to the terms of the agreement as long as the occupation commits to them."

The Israeli people, in fear for the lives of the 76 hostages remaining in Hamas' hands, reacted in fury at their government. Tens of thousands are protesting on the streets, blocking roads, demanding that their government maintain the ceasefire through phase 2 which will return all remaining Israeli hostages, living and dead, end the war with Hamas/Gaza, and fully withdraw the Israeli army from the Gaza Strip.

However, powerful political forces in Israel (Netanyahu's government and the opposition) and the United States (the Jewish and evangelical parts of the Israel lobby) are determined to renew the war in the belief that Hamas can be completely removed from Palestine in general and the Gaza Strip in particular. To that end, Netanyahu ordered the IDF to prepare to renew the war, and Trump threatened to "let all hell break out," unless all hostages were returned by Saturday, Feb. 15.

**LA Jews for Peace** stands for peace by insisting the ceasefire must carry on through phase 2 until the war ends and all Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners are quickly repatriated. In this, we join the U.N., liberal Zionist organizations (e.g., J Street and New Jewish Narrative), Arab states (e.g., Saudi Arabia and Qatar), Arab and Muslim organizations (e.g., Council on American-Islamic Relations and Arab American Institute), and even Hamas.

The contrast between Netanyahu and Trump on one side, and Hamas on the other, is stark. The former seems determined to end the ceasefire and return to war, putting the lives of the remaining Israeli hostages at risk, leaving hundreds of Palestinian prisoners to suffer in prison, and condemning to death tens of Israeli soldiers and hundreds of Palestinian women, children, and other civilians on the Gaza Strip. In contrast, Hamas, while standing its ground, seems dedicated to the ceasefire process. **LA Jews for Peace** condemns the unilateral actions of Netanyahu and Trump.