

LA Jews for Peace
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September 24, 2006

The Honorable Maxine Waters
United States House of Representatives

Dear Ms. Waters,

As Jewish Americans living in Los Angeles and Orange County, we came together over a month ago to call for a ceasefire in the Israel/Lebanon/Gaza war. Under the umbrella of LA Jews for Peace, we urged an end to the Israeli bombings of Lebanon and Gaza, as well as Hezbollah's retaliatory rocket attacks on Israel. When the Israeli Consulate refused to meet with us, we protested publicly at their offices. Our call for a ceasefire and a diplomatic, not military solution, was highlighted in the press, with CNN and local television and radio networks, the Jewish Journal and LA Opinion all covering our opposition to the war.

Since that time, we have sponsored speakers and affiliated ourselves with a national organization, Jewish Voice for Peace (www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org) that opposes the Israeli occupation of Gaza, West Bank, and East Jerusalem.

Most importantly, we are concerned that the US government is exploiting the Israel-Palestinian conflict and related issues involving Lebanon, Syria, and Iran to advance US hegemony in the Middle East, and build a case for going to war against Iran. We want you to know that we strongly object to the use of proxies in this hegemonic chess game, and believe that to encourage warfare, either explicitly by opposing a ceasefire in Lebanon, or implicitly, by selling cluster bombs to Israel and supporting the growth of settlements on the West Bank, jeopardizes the stability of the entire Middle East and endangers the lives of Americans who may suffer repercussions.

The long unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a root cause of anger in the Islamic world. In order to promote world peace and understanding, we must address this conflict by facilitating negotiations with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. In that other conflicts have arisen as a result of the Israeli-Palestinian discord, we urge the US government to engage in talks with Iran, Syria, and Lebanon, as well.

To those who claim there is no partner for peace, we point out that the Palestinians are presently forming a Hamas-Fatah national unity government that has already called for negotiations with Israel based on the 2002 Arab League proposal for normalization of relations between Israel and all 22 Arab nations.

To those who charge that the Palestinians have not recognized Israel's right to exist, we remind them that the PLO did recognize Israel's right to exist at Oslo (1993), and this was the official Palestinian policy of the until the Hamas election. With a unity government on the horizon, recognition seems likely. In any event, mutual recognition should be a goal, not a precondition, of negotiations. For example, prior to Israel's peace agreement with Egypt, Egypt did not recognize Israel and called for Israel's destruction. It was the peace treaty signed by Israel and Egypt that granted mutual recognition.

We urge you to make one of your priorities to work towards resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian and related conflicts. Specifically, we ask you to do the following:

- Support a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon.
- Urge the Israelis to deliver tax-subsidized services long due the Palestinians.
- Award protected status to Palestinians fleeing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and Lebanon.
- Push for both the US and Israel to engage in negotiations with all parties to the conflict because negotiations, not military might, will work to better ensure the safety of the people of Israel, the Palestinians, and the Lebanese.
- Support the removal of the settlements on the West Bank and call for an end to the Israeli occupations.
- Oppose sending cluster bombs to Israel, for these weapons maim civilians and create generational hatred.
- Encourage direct US talks with the leaders of Iran; Oppose war against Iran as a means of conflict resolution.

Finally, we want you to know that there are diverse opinions within the Jewish community in southern California, and that many of us do not believe war leads to peace. Peace leads to peace.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

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