

Dear President Obama: Peace in Israel/Palestine requires Justice

We, the undersigned residents of western Massachusetts, laud the efforts of President Obama to seek peace through negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians and for his appointment of George Mitchell as Special Envoy to the Middle East.

We believe that the US government has failed in its previous efforts to bring about peace in large part because its unconditional support of Israel resulted in the neglect of Palestinian rights and suffering. Lack of recourse to realize their aspirations through a negotiated process has convinced some Palestinians that the only path to freedom and independence is through violence. While the US has rightly criticized Hamas for its rocket attacks against civilians in Israel, the US has not held Israel accountable for its many violations of International Law, particularly violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949).

These violations have included targeting civilian populations, removing civilian populations permanently from their homes, illegal detention and ill-treatment of prisoners, intentional targeting and assassination, the policy of house demolitions, and the continuing settlement of Israelis on illegally occupied lands. The recent conflict in Gaza has resulted in further illegal actions of collective punishment including; bombing and shelling of civilians and civilian targets including schools, mosques, and hospitals and medical personnel; and use of white phosphorus against civilians, an illegal weapon of war that burns individuals to the bone.

Compliance with International Law is the foundation for a just peace. Israel must therefore:

- Withdraw from the occupied territories of West Bank and Gaza
- Dismantle Jewish settlements in the occupied territories
- Remove the Separation Wall from Palestinian]
- Cease controlling Gaza's borders and airspace and permit adequate humanitarian aid to enter Gaza
- Allow the free flow of goods to and from Gaza, to let the Gazan economy recover.

Can we ever see peace between Israelis and Palestinians? Yes, we can - but only within a framework based on justice and respect for the human rights of both peoples. Negotiations between Israel and Palestinians should include all elected representatives of the Palestinian people, including Hamas. We call upon you, President Obama, to promote a just peace for the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples with all of the powers of your office, by insisting on compliance with international and US law.

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We the undersigned agree to have our names published in the Springfield Republican or the Daily Hampshire Gazette in support of this statement.

Printed Name	Signature	Date