

URJ POSITION PAPER

Longstanding URJ Positions on Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The URJ is committed to a Jewish, democratic state of Israel, flourishing in peace and security.

One of the URJ's six core values, which are the moral and ethical imperatives that undergird everything we do, is **Israel and Jewish Peoplehood**. We believe that *Kol yisrael arevim zeh ba'zeh* (Shevuot 39a), "All of Israel and the Jewish people are responsible, one for the other." We are committed to the safety and vitality of the Jewish people and to a secure and just state of Israel as a home – for all Jews and for all its inhabitants.

The URJ has also long expressed overwhelming support for a Palestinian state alongside the Jewish state of Israel, reached through a negotiated agreement between the two parties. We are on record over many decades opposing the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip that began in 1967. We have also opposed -- and continue to oppose -- expansion of settlements in the West Bank and the oppressive treatment of the Palestinian population.

The Israel we struggle for is one that represents the founding principles from Israel's Declaration of Independence:

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

To that end, we also promote efforts within Israel that condemn and fight against racism, respect and support religious pluralism, and end the Orthodox monopoly over religious life. We also believe that Israel's strength is manifested by promoting a shared society between its Jewish and Arab citizens (who comprise around 21% of the population.) These positions are rooted in an understanding of Israel as a vibrant, thriving democracy committed to religious freedom.

Our movement in Israel is represented by the [Israeli Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism](#) and its social justice and advocacy arm, the [Israel Religious Action Center](#). We work closely with these organizations to promote our shared values of a just and secure Jewish and democratic Israel. These and other URJ positions are rooted in resolutions that have been adopted over many decades in an open, consultative, and democratic process. Here are some of our views on key issues:

LOVE FOR AND SOLIDARITY WITH ISRAEL

Our love of Israel is deeply rooted and reflected in our commitment to ensuring its secure, peaceful, pluralistic, and democratic future. In its earliest days as a state, we expressed our [pride and prayers](#)

for Israel's success. We have urged our congregants and congregations to buy Israel bonds to support Israel economically and encouraged aliyah. We joined with Jews worldwide in our concern and mourning during the Yom Kippur war. We celebrated Israel and the PLO's 1993 mutual recognition as a hopeful step toward peace and were deeply pained when that hope was not realized. We have called out efforts to demonize and delegitimize Israel and shared our grave concerns about the existential threat posed by Iran's nuclear program. We have rejected BDS and urged greater engagement with Israel, especially with those Israelis working to strengthen democratic values. And we have proudly encouraged more travel to Israel.

TWO STATE SOLUTION

The two-state solution, an Israeli state and a Palestinian state, living side by side in peace and security is vital for peace. As Rabbi Rick Jacobs has written, "One can be deeply committed to Israel's security and well-being and fully supportive of the right of Palestinians to a homeland that is side-by-side with Israel." In the aftermath of October 7th, peace feels more elusive than ever, but it is essential to preserve a path to an eventual two-state solution.

THE OCCUPATION AND SETTLEMENTS

For decades, we have decried the occupation of the West Bank by Israel. As a 2001 resolution stated, "Occupation involves acts of degradation and cruelty, and Israel's occupation has been no different." We have also made clear that Israeli settlements in the West Bank are a hindrance to peace. A 2009 resolution, "Middle East Peace: The Urgent Need for Leadership," stated clearly our call "for the government of Israel to freeze all settlement construction and immediately dismantle illegal outposts, not only to fulfill its prior commitments, but also to do so as the politically wise and morally right action that enhances Israel's efforts to preserve a secure future for Israel as a Jewish and democratic state."

ANNEXATION

More recently, we adopted a 2020 resolution jointly with our Reform rabbinic colleagues in the CCAR making clear our opposition to unilateral annexation by Israel of areas of the West Bank. As we said, "Annexation may place yet more Palestinians under direct Israeli control while denying them full citizenship rights. Israel's moral standing depends on its commitment to ensuring that Palestinians do not live as second-class citizens without the full democratic rights its Jewish citizens enjoy."

AID TO ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

We have long advocated for aid to Israel and the Palestinians. Foreign aid has historically helped create conditions for peace negotiations, including providing Israel a sense of security and helping the Palestinians meet vital humanitarian needs. Critically, aid from the U.S. to the Palestinians has been provided with guardrails intended to ensure it is not diverted for non-humanitarian purposes such as seizure by Hamas for its terror activity. That advocacy continues today, when such aid is as vitally needed as ever.

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

We insist upon full equality for all streams of Judaism in Israeli religious life. In addition to advocacy for recognition of non-Orthodox conversions and officiation at lifecycle events, our 2017 statement decried the Netanyahu government's decision to walk away from an agreement that would have ended the ultra-Orthodox monopoly at the Kotel.

ARAB CITIZENS OF ISRAEL

Arab citizens comprise approximately 21% of Israel's population. Arabic has special status in Israel and Arab citizens of Israel are accorded the rights and responsibilities of citizenship (aside from compulsory military service, although volunteer service is encouraged by the government). Arab citizens of Israel serve in the Knesset and on the Supreme Court. Nonetheless, significant inequities exist between Jewish and Arab citizens in health, housing, education, employment, and welfare and we have called on the Israeli government to address these inequities. We also strongly opposed the 2018 so-called "nation-state law", which undermined **Israel's founding commitment to democracy** by diminishing the rights of non-Jewish citizens.