

Israel Position Paper – Finkenauer

For both the United States and Israel, no connection is more important than the special relationship between our two countries. It is one I will always fight to continue in Congress, and a bond I felt deeply during my visit to Israel in July 2015.

Amidst wonderful hospitality and generosity from countless Israelis who opened their arms to our delegation, we visited the haunting memorial of Yad Vashem, constructed in tribute to the millions of Jews who lost their lives in the Holocaust. There I found myself in a room commemorating the names of those killed. Glancing up at the ceiling, I saw photographs of those who perished, and all I could think about was how similar those people were to me and my friends and family. I realized the least we can do is protect Israel and ensure a safe home for the Jewish people for eternity.

This means standing firmly with Israel to maintain its physical security in a hostile neighborhood. It requires continuing the deep economic ties our two nations have built so that we create jobs in the United States and foster a strong Israeli economy. It involves defending Israel from anti-Semitic diplomatic attacks at bodies like the United Nations. It results in an unbreakable and mutually beneficial partnership that gives our country an irreplaceable ally in a part of the world where we need every friend we can get. And above all, it's simply the just and moral thing to do.

Maintaining Israel's security

Israel has and always will have a right to defend itself from external threats, and it is critically important that the United States and Israel work together to maintain Israel's qualitative military advantage in the region. Key to this is continued Congressional support for important programs that keep Israeli civilians safe, such as the Iron Dome, David's Sling, and Arrow missile defense systems. These programs are critical to protecting Israelis from short, medium, and long-range missiles, and the Iron Dome system in particular has already saved countless lives. We must also continue to ensure the Israeli military has access to up to date military hardware, and that we maintain close cooperation and training programs between our two militaries at the tactical level. Israel has always been a key and trusted intelligence partner that we rely on heavily in the region, and it is imperative that we continue to work together in that area to share intelligence that keeps both our country's safe from threats.

Bringing peace to the region

In Congress, I will always be a voice in support of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestine crisis, and believe that U.S. leadership is vital in bringing about this goal. This is the only solution that will ensure Israel preserves its character as a Jewish democracy, and any agreement must be structured around borders that satisfy Israel's security and demographic needs. To lay the groundwork for productive negotiations, it is vital that the United States and Israel work to empower moderate Palestinian leadership that recognizes the benefits of coming to an agreement that will improve the lives of millions of Israelis and Palestinians.

Ultimately, any agreement must require Palestine to recognize Israel's right to exist, turn away from its path toward a unilateral declaration of statehood, condemn the violence perpetrated by Hamas and other groups, and result in a non-militarized Palestinian state. In turn, Israel must respect human rights in Palestine and agree to work in good faith with a future Palestinian state.

This generations-long conflict has taken a tragic toll on Israelis and Palestinians alike, and has harmed too many innocent lives on both sides. Each party must do their part for a lasting and durable peace to take hold, and such peace can only be centered on the existence of an independent Palestinian state.

Defending Israel economically and diplomatically

Our commitment to Israel must include ensuring the Jewish state thrives economically and is treated fairly in the world of international diplomacy.

Chiefly, we must work to promote trade and investment between Iowa and Israel, which was a key consumer of Iowa exports to the tune over \$30.6 million in 2016 alone.¹ Like Iowa, Israel has been a leader in the fields of biotechnology and pioneering modern agricultural practices, and we have a lot in common. By fostering and strengthening economic ties between our state and Israel, we can help both Israeli and Iowa companies grow, while creating good jobs for Iowans.

At the same time, we must oppose attempts to harm Israel economically no matter their source. This includes the dangerous BDS movement, which is nothing more than an anti-Semitic attempt to target Jews.

Similarly, we have frequently seen schemes to target Israel diplomatically that are also rooted primarily in anti-Semitism rather than any commitment to justice or fairness claimed. The United States has long been Israel's defender at the United Nations and in other international forums, and we must continue this role. Recent actions such as the Goldstone Report have employed hideous double standards to single out Israel and empower its rivals as countries like Iran and Turkey seek to gain the upper hand. At the same time, efforts to unilaterally declare a Palestinian state without Israel being a part of the process are unproductive and damaging to peace efforts. It's time for these practices to end.

Prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon

Few threats are as existential to Israel's future – and to United States interests in the region – than Iran succeeding in its goal of creating a deliverable nuclear weapons program. Regardless of what one thinks of the nuclear weapons agreement struck with Iran, the simple fact is Iran realized much of the deal's benefits early in the agreement, while we only get the benefit of delaying or ending their nuclear weapons program through vigorous monitoring and continued enforcement of its terms. If any parts of the agreement are credibly found to be violated, the United States must be ready to immediately snap back strict sanctions into place. The passage last December of the 10-year extension of the Iran Sanctions Act was a key step toward this goal.

However, at the same time I do not believe that sanctions should be used to artificially undermine the agreement if Iran is willing to follow its terms, and if the deal were to fall apart now, we would be worse off for it. Beyond its nuclear program, Iran continues to take actions that destabilize the region, threaten the security of Israel and U.S. interests abroad, fund terrorist groups, and gravely violate human rights. We will be better positioned to respond to this behavior if the threat of an Iranian nuclear weapon is taken off the table. We should do all we can to pursue a diplomatic solution to this crisis. But ultimately, the United States must always keep all options on the table to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran.

¹ ["Iowa Gov. Reynolds to Lead Trade Mission to Israel." Associated Press, 6/24/17](#)