



J Street on the Gaza Flotilla and Its Aftermath

The events of recent days are shocking and tragic. We mourn the loss of life and wish the injured a full and speedy recovery.

J Street believes strongly that without immediate leadership to change the course of events, the status quo in the Middle East will lead to further tragedy and ultimately to the demise of the Jewish, democratic Israel that we seek to preserve and protect.

It is incumbent on President Obama, the leaders of the worldwide Jewish community, and the leaders of Israel to seize on this moment of crisis and tragedy and turn it into a meaningful opportunity to end the underlying conflict once and for all.

We urge that Israel immediately appoint a scrupulously independent commission to investigate the events onboard the Marmara and the decisions and circumstances surrounding the tragedy. We do believe that the government of Israel is capable of carrying out such an investigation but recognize its credibility is in doubt. Nothing but an immediate inquiry led by an impartial figure outside the government can produce a report that would be viewed as fair by Israel and the wider international community.

We harbor no illusions about the motives of those who organized the flotilla. While the cargo they carried was humanitarian in nature, their intent was to force the Israeli government to confront the consequences of the blockade of Gaza - including by using the media coverage to further damage Israel's standing in world opinion.

They have succeeded not only in creating negative publicity but in highlighting for the world that Israel's actions and policies go far beyond the measures necessary to prevent the import of weapons and other material aid to terrorists in the Gaza Strip.

Israel may have had the necessary legal justification to enforce its blockade, but the correct question isn't whether it had the right to use force, but whether that decision was strategically wise and furthered the clear goal of promoting the security of a Jewish, democratic and safe Israel. We believe it did not.

J Street's Position:

We call for:

1. Lifting the unproductive blockade of humanitarian and construction materials into Gaza while supporting serious, effective security measures to prevent weapons and other terrorist supplies from entering.
2. The immediate release by Hamas of Corporal Gilad Shalit and Hamas' renunciation of violence as a means of achieving the political goal of Palestinian freedom and independence.

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3. An immediate, serious and dramatic effort, led by President Obama, to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and achieve a two-state solution now.

4. An outpouring of support from the American Jewish community and all those who care about preserving a Jewish, democratic, and safe Israel for immediate movement on the part of the state of Israel toward a diplomatic two-state resolution.

5. The leaders of all sides - Arabs, Palestinians and Israelis - to begin an honest conversation with their people about how this conflict will end and the compromises and sacrifices that will be necessary to avoid further generations of violence, bloodshed and terror.

Finally, we echo President Obama's call for a two-state solution in Cairo one year ago this week:

"Too many tears have been shed. Too much blood has been shed. All of us have a responsibility to work for the day when the mothers of Israelis and Palestinians can see their children grow up without fear; when the Holy Land of the three great faiths is the place of peace that God intended it to be; when Jerusalem is a secure and lasting home for Jews and Christians and Muslims, and a place for all of the children of Abraham to mingle peacefully together as in the story of Isra, when Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed, peace be upon them, joined in prayer."

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