MEMO

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Israel Has Repeatedly Demonstrated Its Commitment to Peace in the 40 Years Following the Six-Day War

After surviving an Arab attempt to destroy it in 1967, Israel immediately offered to return territory it had won from its adversaries in return for genuine peace. Israel's proposal echoed its founders' stated desire to live side-by-side with the Arab world, and the Jewish state has continued making peace overtures to its neighbors for decades after the 1967 conflict. Two of its former adversaries—Egypt and Jordan—accepted Israel's right to exist and signed peace accords with Jerusalem, but others have continued to live in a state of war with Israel.

Israel's efforts to make peace with all of its neighbors date back to the establishment of the Jewish state.

- Reading Israel's Declaration of Independence in 1948, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion said that the new nation would "extend the hand of peace" to all of its neighbors.

- Following the 1956 Suez conflict, Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban publicly told Arab nations that there was "no limit to what we are prepared to contribute so that all of us, together, can live to see a day of happiness for our peoples."

Immediately following the Six-Day War, Israel sought ways to return land it had won in the conflict for genuine peace with its Arab adversaries.

- Less than two weeks after the Six-Day War ended, Israel's Cabinet voted to return all land it had won in the conflict from Egypt and Syria in exchange for peace treaties with Cairo and Damascus. It also voted to open peace talks with Jordan.

- Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan famously said that he was waiting for a phone call from any Arab leader wishing to discuss peace with Israel.

- Rejecting Israel's overtures, the Arab League ruled out any reconciliation with Israel, proclaiming on September 1 in Khartoum that there would be "no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel [and] no negotiations with it."

- Despite the Arabs' rejection of peace, Israel accepted the November 1967 U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, which established the formula governing all subsequent Israeli-Arab peace talks— Israel would give up territories won in the Six-Day War in exchange for Arab recognition of its right to live in peace.

In the years since 1967, Israel has repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to return large portions of territory in exchange for acceptance of its right to exist in peace.

- Even though the 1967 acquisition of the Sinai peninsula more than tripled Israel's size, the Jewish state completely returned it to Egypt under the terms of a 1979 peace treaty in which Cairo became the first Arab country to recognize Israel.

- In 1993, Israel gave the Palestinians unprecedented autonomy over the West Bank and Gaza in exchange for their recognition of Israel and pledge to end terrorism.

- Israel in 1994 ceded territory to Jordan as part of a peace treaty in which Amman became the second Arab state to accept Israel.

- In 2000, Israel endorsed an unprecedented peace deal that would have allowed the Palestinians to establish a state of their own on 95-97 percent of the West Bank and all of Gaza. Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat rejected the deal and began a campaign of violence against Israel.

- With no peace partner on the Palestinian side, Israel in 2005 withdrew from Gaza and an area two times as large in the West Bank, unilaterally granting the Palestinians a chance to govern their own territory.

Basic Facts Summary

- Since its establishment in 1948, Israel has consistently sought peace with all of its Arab neighbors.

- Though Israel won considerable territory during the Six-Day War, it immediately offered to trade land for genuine peace in the conflict's aftermath.

- The 40 years following the Six-Day War have seen Israel maintain its peace efforts and conclude peace accords with Arab states that have accepted its right to exist in peace.