

PRESS RELEASE

AIPAC Applauds Overwhelming Senate Support for Direct Talks

87 Senators to Obama: All Sides Should Stay at Table, Stop Threatening to Walk Away

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AIPAC strongly applauds the U.S. Senate's overwhelming bipartisan statement of support for the continuation of direct talks between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

The [letter to President Obama](#), signed by 87 senators, underscores the commitment that PM Netanyahu has demonstrated to remaining in negotiations despite difficult circumstances and calls on Pres. Abbas to match that commitment and stay in the talks.

Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Johnny Isakson (R-GA) spearheaded the letter, along with their colleagues Sens. Robert P. Casey, Jr. (D-PA) and Richard Burr (R-NC).

The letter praises the Obama administration's efforts to support negotiations and says "it is critical that all sides stay at the table. Neither side should make threats to leave just as the talks are getting started."

In addition, the senators back the Obama administration's commitment not to impose a solution on the parties, reading, "As Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said earlier this month to Israeli and Palestinian leaders, 'We cannot and we will not impose a solution. Only you can make the decisions necessary to reach an agreement for the Israeli and Palestinian people.'"

Direct talks without preconditions are the only proven path to peace and two states—a Jewish state of Israel and a demilitarized Palestinian state—living side-by-side in peace and security.

The full text of the letter is below:

September 27, 2010

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to express our appreciation for your successful effort to restart direct peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, and to pledge our support for this process. As stated in a March 29, 2010 letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton signed by 76

members of the Senate, such talks are in the interest of all parties involved, including the United States.

As you begin the difficult task of facilitating negotiations between the two parties over the coming months, we urge you to continue to emphasize to Israeli and Palestinian leaders that direct talks, while difficult, provide the best hope of reaching a meaningful and lasting peace agreement.

Unfortunately, it is clear that enemies of peace will do everything in their power to derail the direct talks, as evidenced by recent outrageous acts of violence by Hamas, and Iran and Hezbollah's denunciation of the effort even before it began. But we believe that provocations, whether real or perceived, should not derail the process.

Following the brutal murder of four innocent Israeli civilians by Hamas militants at the start of the negotiations, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not abandon the talks. Instead—after forcefully condemning the attack—he reached out to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas saying, “You are my partner for peace. Peace begins with leaders.” We agree with the Prime Minister, and we also agree with you that it is critical that all sides stay at the table. Neither side should make threats to leave just as the talks are getting started.

In addition, we believe that Arab states could do more to provide meaningful political and economic support for this process, including providing increased financial support to the Palestinian Authority. We understand that you share this sentiment and we respectfully request that you use your influence to ensure that there is sustained Arab support for the talks.

Finally, we applaud your commitment not to attempt to impose an agreement on the two parties. As Secretary of State Clinton recently stated to Israeli and Palestinian leaders, “only you can make the decision necessary to reach an agreement for the Israeli and Palestinian people.” To truly achieve positive and meaningful results, it is absolutely critical to have an agreement that is carefully negotiated and ultimately embraced by both sides, and provides for Israel's lasting security.

We also appreciate your recent efforts to reaffirm the long-standing, special relationship between the United States and Israel, and for providing such robust support for Israel's security needs. For more than 60 years, the U.S. and Israel have shared a special bond, based in large part on our mutual commitment to security, democracy, and human rights. Embracing that special bond provides the best hope for securing peace between Israel and her neighbors.

In closing, we would like to thank you for your commitment to bringing peace to this important and volatile region of the world. For too long, this dispute has caused heartbreaking suffering for men, women, and children alike. It is time for Israelis and Palestinians to finally have the opportunity to live side-by-side-in peace and security.

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