

Congressman Panetta responding to your message

Email Address Omitted by Brandon Lund

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JIMMY PANETTA
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July 15, 2021

Dear Brandon,

Thank you for contacting me regarding recent conflict in the Gaza Strip. I appreciate your interest in the issues facing the country and welcome the opportunity to respond.

Earlier this year, following increasing tensions and long-held divisions, armed conflict erupted between Israelis and Hamas, the Palestinian militant group that governs the Gaza Strip. After Hamas fired indiscriminate rockets into Jerusalem, Israel responded with precision airstrikes on Gaza. Tragically, the armed conflict led to hundreds of casualties, the majority Palestinians, and further deteriorated humanitarian conditions in Gaza. Fortunately, a fragile ceasefire was reached after 11 days of fighting.

It is deeply troubling and concerning to see the violence and conditions in Gaza. The current situation is unsustainable, presenting humanitarian and governance challenges to the Palestinians, security threats to Israel, and serving as a source of regional tension and instability. There have been numerous diplomatic efforts to establish a peaceful resolution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, including the 1991 Madrid Conference, the 1993 Oslo Accords, the 2000 Camp David Summit, the 2001 Taba Negotiations, and the 2013-2014 Peace Talks. Unfortunately, conflict still exists.

On May 18, 2021, I joined my colleagues in the House of Representatives to call on President Biden and his Administration to facilitate an immediate cessation of violence and to press both sides to negotiate a ceasefire. I also have repeatedly supported U.S. contributions to the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) and bilateral assistance to the West Bank and Gaza. Those programs support food security for vulnerable families, education services, emergency healthcare preparedness, employment, positive youth engagements, and water and sanitation requirements to improve Palestinians' quality of life. I will continue to urge bold leadership and actions to promote peace and nonviolence in the region.

While lasting peace has proved elusive, hope remains for a successful resolution through steady, responsible American, Israeli, Palestinian, and regional leadership. Peace will require good-faith negotiations built upon de-escalation of tensions, honest peace negotiations, and improved economic aid. We must continue to support and work towards a two-state solution that guarantees the existence of a safe, sovereign Palestine and a democratic, Jewish Israel.

Recently, a new government, composed of a broad political coalition, assumed power in Israel. It will be the first-ever coalition spanning the far left to the far right that includes an Arab Islamist party and excludes the Orthodox Jewish parties. The new coalition has a thin majority to lead and faces a number of challenges, including many from the previous Israeli leadership. That is why I would not want to jeopardize the new government's chances for success by threatening to place conditions on promised aid for the security of the country at this time. I look forward