

THE  
CARTER CENTER



**Carter Center Guiding Principles  
on the Way Forward in Israel and Palestine**

*Jan. 19, 2024*

The need for a clear path toward peaceful coexistence between Israel and the Palestinians that recognizes the right to self-determination for Palestine is more urgent than ever. Adherence to international law and universal human rights principles must guide the actions of all parties as they work for a way forward.

President Carter and The Carter Center have been committed to this goal for decades. The Carter Center continues to call for an immediate cease-fire and full access to humanitarian assistance. The Center also calls for the immediate release of civilian hostages and civilians detained without charge under administrative detention, as well as an exchange of prisoners.

Hamas' attack on Oct. 7 was the deadliest assault on Israel since its founding. As the families of the victims continue to mourn and the fate of hostages remains uncertain, the people of Israel are experiencing ongoing trauma, as well as significant threats from rocket attacks emanating from Gaza and other regional actors. The explosion of violence has brought tragedy and deep wounds to the Israeli people.

The Israeli military response in Gaza has led to a human catastrophe of death and the cutting of basic human needs and humanitarian goods. Palestinian civilians face extreme hunger, disease, and injuries that cannot be adequately treated. Impeding humanitarian assistance constitutes a grave violation of international law. Meanwhile, violence against Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem threatens to widen the conflict. These events have brought tragedy and deep wounds to Palestinians.

The US and the wider international community should require steps toward a political settlement inclusive of all parties and provide incentives for progress -- and penalties for lack of progress. Israelis and Palestinians have the right to live in peace and security. This can only be achieved through dialogue and determined diplomacy that paves the way for a peace process. The priorities for these efforts should include the following guiding principles:

- **Adherence to international law and human rights:** The authors of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other treaties concerning human rights and armed conflict understood that wars are more likely to erupt when grave human rights violations are allowed to happen with impunity. International law and human rights principles

emphasize our common humanity and seek to establish harmony among nations. They can serve those committed to peaceful coexistence as they begin to chart the future path for Israel and Palestine.

- **Immediate ceasefire:** All parties should work for a ceasefire. The US and the wider international community should condition security, including military aid, to any party on their adherence to international law and human rights norms. The continuation of violence and violations of international law make the path forward difficult. There is no military solution to this conflict, and the sooner the violence ends, the sooner a path forward can be created.
- **Palestinian governance:** There must be an immediate and inclusive transitional governing process for Palestinians in Gaza along with security arrangements that ensure equal measures of safety and human rights for Israelis and Palestinians. To achieve this, Israel must be willing to end its occupation, consistent with the principles embodied in UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and accept a viable Palestinian state whose citizens can determine their own future and live in dignity and security. In any future resolution, the Palestinian people should determine through a democratic process the governing structure in the West Bank and Gaza.
- **Ending forced displacement and the blockade:** Palestinians should not be forced to leave their homes, including by the confiscation of Palestinian lands occupied since 1967. The blockade on Gaza should be ended, humanitarian supplies should be allowed unhindered access, essential services should be restored, and Israeli forces should not remain in Gaza.

The cycle of violence can be stopped if these key principles are adopted. We must commit to never again allow such spasms of violence to be repeated, and we must redouble our efforts to secure a just peace for all inhabitants of the region.