

Decision Time for Israeli-Palestinian Peace. An Open Letter to President Obama

By [Ralph Nader](#)

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

Dear President Obama:

On November 28, 2016, Jimmy Carter, the President who negotiated the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt in 1978, wrote an op ed for the *New York Times* titled, "[America Must Recognize Palestine](#)." His urgent plea was directed to you to take "the vital step...to grant American diplomatic recognition to the state of Palestine, as 137 countries have already done, and help it achieve full United Nations membership," before you leave office on January 20, 2017.

Mr. Carter referenced your reaffirmation in 2009 of the Camp David agreement between Israel and Egypt and United Nations Resolution 242 when you called "for a complete freeze on settlement expansion on Palestinian territory that is illegal under international law." He noted that in 2011 you made clear that, in your words, "the borders of Israel and Palestine should be based on the 1967 lines" and that "negotiations should result in two states, with permanent Palestinian borders with Israel, Jordan and Egypt, and permanent Israeli borders with Palestine."

Former President Carter sees that the "combined weight of United States recognition, United Nations membership [for Palestine] and a UN Security Council resolution solidly grounded in international law would lay the foundation for future diplomacy."

With Israeli lawmakers moving to annex more Palestinian land (the 22 percent left of old Palestine), prompting a public plea by outgoing UN chief Ban Ki-moon to reconsider, and the forthcoming carte blanche for Israeli repression of the Palestinians from the Trump Administration, Mr. Carter sees these measures as "the best—now, perhaps, the only—means of countering the one-state reality that Israel is imposing on itself and the Palestinian people" and "that could destroy the Israeli democracy."

He adds that "recognition of Palestine and a new Security Council resolution are not radical new measures, but a natural outgrowth of America's support for a two-state solution."

In the remaining post-election weeks of your final term, you are freer than you've ever been to make these decisions for peace and justice in that troubled area—moves rooted in your pronouncements early in your first term.

More than any other president, you have approved the greatest transfer of the latest military weapons, research and intelligence to the Israeli government. More than any president, you have agreed to an unprecedented 10 year deal for the multi-billion dollar

annual military assistance program. No other country has ever come close to receiving that gift from the American Taxpayers.

More than any other president, you have been forbearing to the extreme when the Israeli prime minister, in an impetuous move, widely criticized in Israel, circumvented the White House in 2015 so as to undermine your delicate, multi-lateral negotiations with Iran by his addressing a joint session of Congress.

In return for all this largess and astonishing self-restraint, you have been the subject of a non-stop revilement in Israel with ugly racist epithets and absurd accusations of anti-Semitism against Jews. This campaign of calumny has brought down your approval polls there often to single digits and diminished the Israeli peace movement.

Is it not time for action on behalf of regional peace? You'll have the support of the active peacemakers on both sides—including numerous former heads of the Israeli domestic and foreign intelligence agencies (see The [Gatekeeper](#) and the [S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace](#)), former cabinet ministers, mayors and public intellectuals, not to mention stalwart Israeli human rights organizations, such as [B'Tselem](#).

As if any further urgency to act is needed, you must be appalled by the declarations of Donald Trump and his selection of his bankruptcy lawyer, who is privy to Trump's innermost business dealings, David Friedman, to be the next Ambassador to Israel.

Friedman, who has accused you of "blatant anti-Semitism," is a hard-liner on Israeli colonial expansionism and annexations in the West Bank. His bigotry against Palestinian Arabs is deep and long standing, making him an anti-Semite against these Arabs whose Semitic ancestors have lived there since time immemorial (See James Zogby's "[The Other Anti-Semitism](#)"). If Friedman reflects Mr. Trump's policies, the uncontrollable eruption of this long-simmering conflict is seen as a near certainty by expanding Jewish-American groups such as J Street and Jewish Voices for Peace.

What more foreboding do you need?

Many commentators who know you have described your last year in office as rounding out your historical legacy as President. I have suggested a number of initiatives that help define your presidency (see [Return to Sender](#)).

But Jimmy Carter is experienced, right and prescient—he's earned that encomium—in believing that joining the community of nations by recognizing Palestine, allowing the UN security Council resolution to be passed and supporting UN membership for Palestine could be your most consequential contribution to Middle East security, and our domestic priorities, with other likely collateral benefits for world peace.

The American people, for the most part, including Jewish and Arab Americans, judging by the polls over time, would applaud such statesman-like actions.

Sincerely yours,

Ralph Nader

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