

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Jewish Community Relations Council of New York
Congressional Breakfast
Sunday, March 26, 1995

The Jewish community values the support of the New York delegation and the many congressional initiatives sponsored by our Representatives and Senators. Many of these measures reflect a deep and abiding commitment to issues of concern to the Jewish community. As we take stock of our mutual concerns and priorities, we ask Congress to take note of the following issues which enjoy a broad consensus in the Jewish community and are considered to be high on our agenda.

International

Foreign Aid

We ask that Congress ensure America's role as the world's leading superpower. Foreign assistance is a cost effective way to strengthen allies and protect U.S. interests. Foreign aid promotes peace in the Middle East. We call for support of \$3 billion in regular foreign aid; oppose all cutting amendments, Israel specific or across the board; and support overall foreign aid.

Peace Process

The U.S.-Israel relationship guarantees the Middle East peace process. We endorse our country's continuing role in facilitating the peace negotiations. *We demand that Chairman Arafat comply with the Declaration of Principles, aggressively fight terrorism, and renounce the Palestine Covenant.* In doing so, we support the strengthening of the Palestinian Authority through financial contributions pledged by the U.S. and other international donors. We urge Syria to pursue full peace with Israel. We commend the establishment of Israel-Jordanian diplomatic relations, and praise America's political and economic contributions which stimulated this agreement. We note encouraging signs of openness to Israel on the part of several Arab countries. We encourage Congress to urge other Arab nations to follow Jordan's example and normalize relations with Israel, totally renounce the boycott and integrate Israel as a full Middle East partner in the Middle East. We applaud our government's commitment to Israel's security, maintaining Israel's qualitative military edge

and continued U.S.-Israel strategic cooperation.

Terrorism

Terrorism is a global threat. We applaud the U.S. for initiating Administrative and Congressional actions to curtail terrorism. We encourage additional, more aggressive counterterror policies. *These measures will enhance our "dual containment" doctrine against Iran and Iraq.* The counterterrorism agenda should include: federal anti-terrorism statutes; barriers to fund raising and other material support; trade and commercial transfer restrictions; and increased international cooperation and intelligence sharing. We further urge intensified investigations into, and severe prosecution of, perpetrators of terrorist attacks. We especially call upon Argentina to conclude its investigation into the terror attacks against the Argentine Jewish community. *We urge the international community to aggressively join the war against terror by adopting measures sanctioning individuals, groups and states which support terror. Only a concerted international effort, and serious implementation of anti-terror policies will contain this threat to global interests and stability.*

Arab Boycott

The boycott is contrary to the peace process. We commend those Arab countries who have modified their boycott policies. However, signs of weakening the boycott does not substitute for full renunciation of the boycott. The international community should follow the lead of the Clinton Administration and Congress and persist in condemning the boycott, pressuring for its termination and legislating and enforcing its illegality and prohibition.

Israeli MIA's and POW's

All efforts should be expended to secure information of the whereabouts of the Israeli MIA's and POW's. The fates of Israeli Air Force navigator Ron Arad, and Israeli soldiers Zachary Baumel, Zvi Feldman and Yehuda Katz are a dire human rights issue.

Jerusalem

Historically, politically, religiously and culturally, Jerusalem represents the heart and soul of the Jewish people. Under Israeli sovereignty, access to holy places of worship has been ensured to followers of all faiths. Jerusalem cannot be considered as occupied territory and must remain the united, undivided capital of Israel. We support Congressional initiatives calling for the moving of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, no later than May, 1999.

Domestic

School Prayer

JCRC will continue to oppose prayer in the public schools, including silent meditation.

Religious Freedom

Some Supreme Court cases unduly and unfairly restrict the religious liberty of employees. The JCRC supports the passage of the Workplace Religious Freedom Act which strengthens the religious accomodation provisions of the Civil Rights Law of 1964.

Assault Weapons

The JCRC opposes any attempt to reverse the ban on assault weapons.

Public Housing

In the New York Jewish community, policy on human services issues is coordinated by the Public Policy Committee of UJA-Federation.

Their key issues include:

Children and Families

We are pleased at the federal government's efforts over the past few years to invest additional resources in addressing the problems of insufficient child care for the working poor and in strengthening child protection services. Proposals that would cut funding and quality standards for important services funded by the Child Care and Development Block Grant and Head Start program would reverse the progress that has been made and would threaten the well-being of many children.

Welfare Reform

While we are committed to the goal of moving families from welfare to work, we are very concerned that legislation which makes the AFDC program discretionary, sets lifetime time limits on assistance and denies most benefits to legal permanent residents would endanger the welfare of needy children and poor families.

Immigrants and Refugees

The United State's proud heritage as a melting pot nation has been tarnished by recent efforts to deny

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assistance to legal immigrants. We support the continuation of the generous immigration and refugee resettlements programs that enable newcomers to achieve self-sufficiency and full participation in society.

Housing for the Elderly

The insufficient supply of affordable housing in New York City poses a threat to the ability of the marginal income elderly and those with incomes at or below poverty level to live independently. The Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program has well served the needs of thousands of low-income elderly. We are very concerned that proposals to end the Section 202 program will greatly increase the ranks of the elderly homeless.

AIDS

AIDS has become the number one cause of death among men and women aged 25-44. We believe that reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act this year is essential, as the Act has been the primary instrument for providing critical care and related services to people with HIV.

Prevention Programs in the Crime Bill

The prevention programs created in last year's Crime Bill represent an important commitment to reducing crime. These programs fight crime by providing individuals with alternatives and new opportunities, and we support their full appropriation.