



Statement of COMMUNITY CONCERNS

February 2017



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Photo credit: Geoff Livingston

The Jewish community values the support of the New York congressional delegation and the many initiatives sponsored by our representatives and senators. 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 are supported by a broad consensus in the Jewish community and high on our agenda.



Israel received its first two fifth-generation F-35 Joint Strike Fighters, code-named by the Israeli Air Force as “Adir” (The Mighty One). The December 12, 2016 ceremony included thousands of invitees, and speeches by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter.

Photo Credit: U.S. Embassy in Israel

THE U.S. - ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

The unbreakable bond shared by the United States and Israel is based on common core values and beliefs and has been strengthened through mutually beneficial partnerships. President Obama correctly observed in September 2016 that “It is a very dangerous and difficult time in the Middle East and we want to make sure that Israel has the full capabilities it needs in order to keep the Israeli people safe.” With the passage of the *United States-Israel Advanced Research Partnership Act of 2016* (allowing the Departments of State and Homeland Security to cooperate with Israel to enhance cybersecurity capabilities to combat terrorism), Congress codified an important facet of this relationship.

The U.S.-Israel relationship was strengthened further that month when both countries finalized an unprecedented \$38 billion package of American military aid for Israel to be allotted over the next decade, all of which must be spent in the United States. While terrorist groups, including Hezbollah and Hamas, continue to fire rockets at Israeli citizens, the package includes financial support for Israeli missile defense systems. We echo the

gratitude of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who said that this action will help “continue to support Israel’s right to defend itself and thrive as a Jewish state.” This deal represents a major commitment to Israel’s security by the Obama administration and Congress, which we expect will continue and flourish under President Trump, who speaks of himself as “a lifelong supporter and true friend of Israel.”

Over the past year, the joint development of military technology proved its effectiveness and demonstrated the strategic partnership between the United States and Israel. The Arrow, David’s Sling, and Iron Dome systems — jointly developed by U.S. and Israeli contractors — are among the world’s most sophisticated anti-missile shields and vital to Israel’s security. In December 2016, Israel and the U.S. celebrated the delivery of the American-made F-35 stealth fighter jet. The U.S. determined that the first deliveries of the aircraft, which will enhance Israel’s security capabilities, should be to Israel’s Air Force.

Moving further into 2017, a multitude of challenges — ranging from the expanding military capabilities of the terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah, to Iran’s continued testing of intercontinental ballistic missiles, to the aftermath of the Syrian civil war, and to additional threats from the Islamic State — make it increasingly difficult and expensive for Israel to support its defense spending without security assistance. JCRC-NY applauds the Obama Administration and Congress for their ongoing security assistance and military collaboration to ensure Israel’s abilities to meet all these challenges and maintain a qualitative military edge over its neighbors in the Middle East.

Public support for Israel amongst Americans is largely widespread. Multiple opinion polls show that there is bipartisan support, amongst Republicans and Democrats alike, for Israel’s right to exist and to defend itself. There is growing concern that the support for Israel by liberal Democrats has eroded since 2014. We urge our Members of Congress and all elected officials to build bipartisan support for Israel and not turn it into a wedge issue. The U.S. - Israel alliance, based on Israel’s role as a solid, democratic ally, is in the best interests of America and the world.

JERUSALEM

Under Israeli sovereignty, Jerusalem is open to followers of all faiths, with access to all holy places. Jerusalem is the eternal, undivided capital of Israel, having been the historical and spiritual center of the Jewish people for more than 3,000 years. JCRC-NY thanks Congress for its efforts to ensure that Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount, remains united as the capital of the Jewish State.

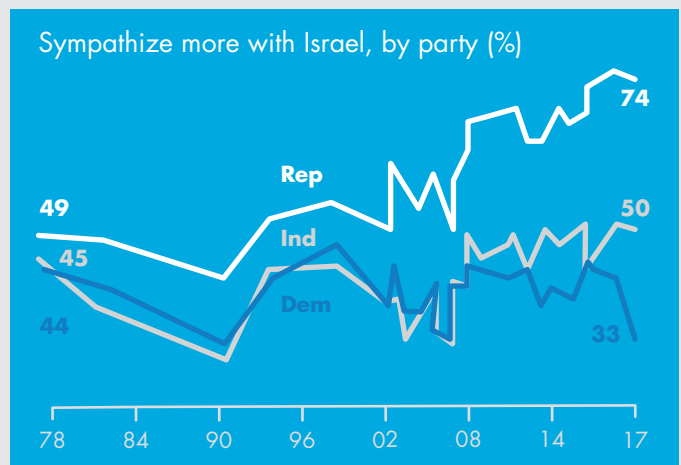
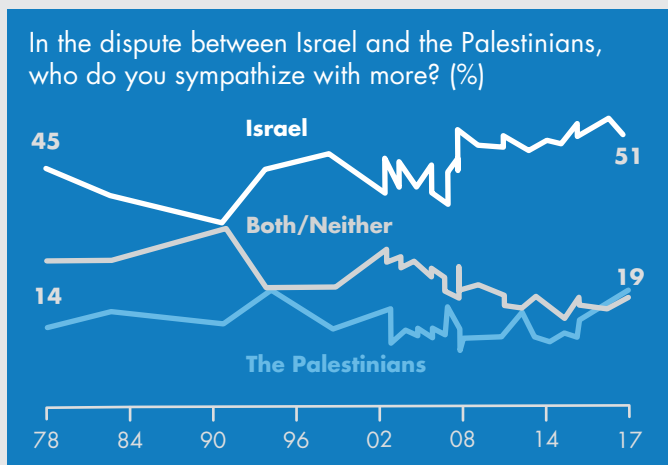
JCRC-NY reaffirms its historic endorsement of the *Jerusalem Embassy Relocation Act of 1995*. The Act grants the President the authority to suspend its provisions to protect the national security interests of the United States. Such determination should be left to the Administration’s national security team.

THE PEACE PROCESS

We are grateful to the American people and the U.S. Government for their continuing support of Israel’s peace and security. It is unfortunate that no direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians have occurred since April 2014. We see that there is hope that Israelis and Palestinians can cooperate — evidenced by the Palestinian Authority’s decision to send assistance to Israel to fight recent deadly forest fires. We believe that any solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict requires both states to endorse fully the premise of two states for two peoples, with Israel acknowledged as the nation state of the Jewish people.

The history of this conflict reinforces the concept that peace can only be achieved through direct negotiations. It is regretful that in 2016 the Palestinian Authority chose to seek full statehood through the United Nations rather than through talks with Israel. Such efforts to internationalize the conflict fail to bring peace closer and only incentivize both parties to harden their positions and to avoid direct negotiations. We remain distressed by the failure of the United States to veto *U.N. Security Council Resolution 2334*, which further isolates Israel and will be unfairly used to delegitimize it within the international community. While the resolution assigned the brunt of the blame upon Israel due to construction beyond the 1967 armistice lines, it failed to underscore both decades of

Partisan gap in Mideast sympathies is now wider than at any point since 1978



Notes: 1978-1990 data from Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. Don’t know responses not shown. Q61.
Source: Survey conducted Jan. 4-9, 2017.
PEW RESEARCH CENTER.

Palestinian rejections of Jewish statehood and the historical Jewish attachment to the land.

Instead of taking steps for peace, Palestinian leaders have incited terror attacks, aiming vehicular ramming and stabbing attacks at Israeli civilians and Americans. Under Palestinian Authority law, family members of terrorists who murder Israelis are paid a monthly, government stipend for the rest of their lives. We believe that U.S. foreign assistance to the Palestinian Authority must be contingent on ironclad assurances that the PA is taking concrete steps to end such violence.

Over the past two decades, Israel withdrew from the Sinai, Gaza and Lebanon and put serious and painful concessions on the table while negotiating with the Palestinian Authority towards an end to the conflict. The Palestinian leadership rejected these offers without making any counter-offer. It is long past due for the United Nations, the United States and the international community to pressure Palestinian leaders to negotiate directly with Israel to achieve a lasting resolution to the conflict.

IRAN

A nuclear-armed Iran is a genuine threat to Israel, the United States and our allies across the globe. Moreover, Iran's relentless pursuit of intercontinental-range ballistic missiles, support of international terrorist organizations, military support of the Assad regime, and ongoing human rights violations prove that it is not deserving of the international community's trust.

On July 14, 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed detailing how over a 15 year period, Iran would significantly reduce its nuclear enrichment capabilities in exchange for sanctions relief. Despite agreements to redesign nuclear plants and reactors in Fordo and Natanz and to provide increased access to the International Atomic Energy Agency to monitor any suspicious activities by the regime, we remain skeptical of the ability of the Iranian regime to forgo development of nuclear weapons and peacefully join the community of nations. While the JCPOA does not prohibit Iran from testing Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM), these tests violate *U.N. Security Council Resolution 2331*, which states, "Iran is called upon not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons." The Hebrew caption, "Israel shall be wiped off the Earth," was painted on a long-range test missile in March 2016, giving reason for grave concern and our utmost vigilance. The recent breach involving Iran's stock of heavy water in addition to the continued testing and gas injection of IR-8 centrifuges signal the need for ongoing vigilance with regard to keeping Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

We urge the Administration and Congress to hold Iran to the letter of the JCPOA and U.N. Security Council Resolutions to prove its supposedly peaceful intentions with actions, not words. We expect the U.S. Government and its partners in the P5+1 and the international community to respond appropriately, should the Iranian regime violate any terms of the agreement.

Even with the implementation of the JCPOA, we applaud the United States Congress for passing a 10-year extension of sanctions against Iran in December 2016. Passage of this act will serve to further ensure that sanctions will quickly be re-imposed should Iran violate the agreement.

A further reason for Jewish communal disenchantment with Iran is its continuous label by the U.S. State Department as the top state sponsor of terrorist activities. Its financial and military support of the Assad regime in Syria and terrorist regimes in Lebanon, Iraq, Bahrain, Gaza and Yemen has not ceased, despite its agreement to the terms in the JCPOA. In fact, monies obtained by Iran via sanctions relief are likely to directly finance such international terrorism. We urge Congress to demand that Iran cease sponsorship of global terrorism or face additional economic sanctions.

Iran continues to be one of the worst human rights violators in the world. In 2015, Iran executed 1,000 individuals. This is five times the number of executions from 2010 and 10 times that of 2005. In addition to the alarming increase in executions, fundamental rights of Iranians and ethnic and religious minorities continue to regress. More than 200 Iranian Christians remain imprisoned for practicing their faith. A 7,000-strong undercover police force called "Gashte Ershad" monitors and arrests women who do not conform to Islamic modes of dress and behavior. The death penalty can be applied to gays, and lesbians can be punished with flogging. Such disturbing trends must not go unnoticed.

ISRAEL'S INCREASINGLY DANGEROUS NEIGHBORHOOD

To many, the "Arab Spring" brought cautious optimism. Unfortunately, the past six years have led to more "failed states" than true democracies.

SYRIA

The war in Syria has lasted for over five years and has claimed the lives of an estimated 470,000 people. The Assad regime and ISIS have committed mass murder, having used chemical weapons on Syrian men, women, and children. Nearly 31,000 people were killed as a result of the siege of and attack on Aleppo. Millions of civilians have fled their homes to find refuge, thus creating one of the largest refugee crises in history. These migrants are composed of those seeking to apply for refugee

status using the right of asylum, but also include a small number of hostile individuals include ISIS militants. Terrorist attacks, in Paris, Berlin, Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, San Bernardino, Orlando, and Ohio State University, were inspired by ISIS.

In early 2014, ISIS began taking over large areas in Syria, including areas immediately adjacent to the Israeli border. Israeli forces in the Golan Heights are in a constant state of alert. Since large contingents of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) withdrew from the demilitarized zone between Israel and Syria, various Islamic extremist groups have taken over much of the area including ISIS and Jabhat-al Nusra. While Israel has no intention of invading the demilitarized zone, it will launch strikes against individual targets when attacked. In the midst of a brutal war, more than 2,000 injured Syrians have received care in Israeli hospitals, including fighters from Jabhat al-Nusra. Hezbollah troops (with support from Iran) were brought in to prop up the Syrian regime and are now battle-hardened veterans. Hezbollah, ISIS and al-Qaeda affiliates have taken positions near Israel's northern border with Syria.

Most alarmingly, almost 11 million Syrians are displaced, including 4.8 million who have been forced to seek safety in neighboring countries. Refugees are fleeing to Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq. Many have also chosen to make the dangerous journey to Western Europe, creating both a humanitarian crisis and an opportunistic cover for ISIS-trained terrorists wishing to attack Western institutions.

HEZBOLLAH

Disconcertingly, Hezbollah continues to gain strength in the region. Since its last war with Israel in 2006, Hezbollah has amassed over 160,000 rockets along with tanks, armored personnel carriers, anti-aircraft weapons, and motorcycles for rapid attack teams. Hezbollah is sending a strong message that any future campaign by Israel against them will not be limited to Lebanese territory and will cause significant blows against Israel and the IDF. We are also aware that Iran is smuggling weapons and ammunition to Hezbollah through Syria. Hezbollah's newfound capacity, coupled with Israel's determination to act decisively in a future conflict, suggest that the next war between the two will be much more destructive than the last.

HAMAS

Tensions are still running high in the wake of the 2014 war with Hamas. Hamas has been manufacturing and firing tens of thousands of rockets over the past decade. Since Operation Protective Edge, Hamas has restocked its weapons arsenal (with the know-how to develop long-range Iranian Fajr-5 missiles and Syrian M-302's) and is digging new tunnels under the border

with Israel. Hamas now has rockets that can reach virtually all of Israel. They track IDF movements and survey Israeli border communities using kites with GoPros and drones. Hamas' military wing is becoming more institutionalized, which helps the IDF understand how it operates. The IDF remains vigilant and is thwarting numerous terrorist attempts. In December 2016, a joint Shin Bet, IDF, and police operation uncovered a Nablus-based Hamas network of 20 operatives who were planning on carrying out a series of suicide bombings in major Israeli cities and shooting attacks across Judea and Samaria that would have caused widespread death and destruction.

Complicating the situation is Israel's discovery that the Hamas terror group, which rules the coastal Gaza Strip territory, assists ISIS-affiliated groups in the Sinai with financial, communications, training, and organizational support. ISIS in the Sinai has grown more technologically advanced and well-equipped adding to the existential threats faced by Israel on a daily basis.

INSPIRING "LONE WOLVES"

The recent series of Palestinian terrorist attacks against Israelis is the direct result of incitement by radical Islamist and terrorist elements calling on Palestinian youth to murder Jews. Since September 2016, 46 people have been killed in terrorist attacks and 649 (including four Palestinians) injured. There have been 169 stabbing attacks, 103 attempted stabbings, 126 shootings, 51 vehicular ramming attacks, and one vehicle bus bombing. Young lone terrorists, the majority from east Jerusalem and some from Judea and Samaria, carried out most of these attacks. Generally, the terrorists were not formally under the command-and-control of any established terrorist organization, rather they are directly inspired by terrorist groups.

DISASTER AND HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

The sage Hillel asked, "If I am only for myself, what am I?" We proudly recognize the extraordinary responses of the Israeli government and American Jewish organizations to disasters around the world.

For 102 years, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) has leveraged its work with Jewish communities in crisis by providing a Jewish response to natural disasters, war, and other emergencies worldwide, saving lives and rebuilding communities. Deploying its team of experts, and in partnership with local Jewish communities, local and global NGOs, JDC's robust disaster relief program includes the provision of food, clothing, fresh water, medicine, temporary housing, and post-trauma care. Long-term projects include rebuilding schools and hospitals, job-training, and other long-term development projects. In 2016 alone, JDC responded to 14 disasters, including earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, and the global refugee crisis, aiding over 100,000 people in Nepal, Haiti, Macedonia, and Ecuador, among other places. This year, the American Jewish World Service (AJWS), which works to end poverty and advance human rights in the developing world, provided grants to 450 social change organizations in 19 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. By providing immediate humanitarian assistance after a disaster, AJWS creates lasting change as communities recover and rebuild. They have assisted in fighting the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, earthquakes in Haiti and Nepal, and Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

Jewish humanitarian responses are extensive and complex. JDC chairs the Jewish Coalition for Disaster Relief, coordinating the work of over 45 U.S. and foreign Jewish agencies representing the full spectrum of Jewish life, including: The Jewish Federations of North America, local Jewish communities overseas, American Jewish World Service, the U.S. Department of State, USAID, Interaction, the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Israeli relief agencies, and the United Nations.

In November 2016, the United Nations World Health Organization recognized the Israeli Defense Force's field hospital as number one in the world and classifying it as the first and only Type 3 field hospital. It is regularly sent abroad to disaster sites to provide immediate medical care to the local population. Israeli disaster relief delegations are often one of the first and largest delegations to arrive at the scenes of natural disasters.

Over the past year, MASHAV, the humanitarian assistance arm of Israel's Foreign Ministry, responded to a diverse range of needs throughout the world in more than 45 countries. In order to help fight the Zika virus, MASHAV developed a pesticide to exterminate the *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito, which is threatening Brazil and other countries. MASHAV also provides courses for

developing countries in agriculture, early childhood education, serving the elderly, and medical care. Other MASHAV efforts included: establishing neonatal medical units in Ghana; a therapeutic program promoting soccer in Myanmar for youth with disabilities; and the signing of an MOU with Italy and Ethiopia to cooperate in the fields of health and medicine.

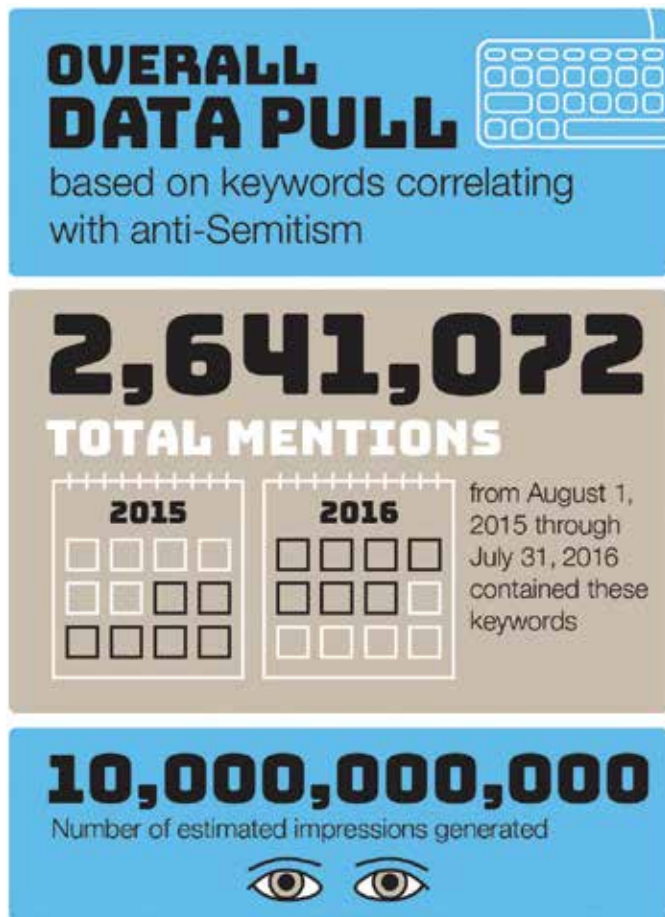
The current Syrian refugee crisis may be the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II. To date, an estimated 470,000 Syrians were killed, including 50,000 children, and over 12 million Syrians have been forced to flee their homes. Approximately 5 million Syrians have sought refuge in neighboring countries or abroad. Since 2013, IsraAID has distributed relief items within refugee camps in Jordan, expanding its operations to include Mental Health and Psycho-Social Services (MHPS) training for Syrian and Jordanian professionals operating in refugee camps. IsraAID is also providing emergency relief items to thousands of displaced Yezidi and Christian families and is launching education projects to support the Kurdish education system, which has been overwhelmed by Syrian refugees. IsraAID has emergency teams both on the beaches in Greece and at key border points in Macedonia and Croatia ready to assist with predominantly Arabic speaking teams that provide life-saving medical services and Psychological First Aid (PFA) for traumatized and grief-stricken families and survivors of boating accidents. IsraAID's mobile relief teams are present in camps and on the borders of Croatia and Serbia to provide protection services, distribute emergency supplies, and identify special needs groups, emphasizing children. With winter well on its way, and conditions worsening on land and sea, the situation is increasingly desperate, and IsraAID is committed to responding.

ANTI-SEMITISM

The past two years have been marked by an alarming rise in anti-Semitic incidents in the United States and around the world. Acts of terrorism, bomb threats against Jewish community centers and other institutions, and attempted attacks against Jewish targets have significantly increased by parties ranging from those identifying with extremist Islamic movements to radicals of the left and right. Accompanying this trend was increased street harassment toward Jews and verbal and physical violence.

According to the Anti-Defamation League, 10 percent of Americans harbor anti-Semitic attitudes, an increase from nine percent in 2014. The 2015 FBI Hate Crime Statistic data show that over 52 percent of the 1,402 victims of anti-religious hate crimes were victims of an offender's anti-Jewish bias. This percentage is the highest of all religious groups and illustrates that America still has a long way to go.

Anti-Semitic incidents on American college campuses nearly doubled in 2015. A total of 90 incidents were reported on 60



Source: Anti-Semitic Targeting of Journalists During the 2016 Presidential Campaign: A report from ADL's Task Force on Harassment and Journalism | Anti-Defamation League | October 19, 2016

college campuses in 2015, compared with 47 incidents on 43 campuses in 2014. We applaud the United States Senate for passing the *Anti-Semitism Awareness Act of 2016* in December 2016, and we encourage the House to follow accordingly. The bill will provide the Department of Education with a benchmark definition of anti-Semitism allowing investigations into incidents on campus to determine when anti-Israel attitudes cross over into anti-Semitic ones.

The increasingly hostile attitude towards the Jewish community throughout Europe and South America is alarming. In 2016, arson, mugging, assaults, desecration of cemeteries, and the defacing and vandalism of property affected Jewish communities in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, South Africa, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and Uruguay, in addition to multiple incidents in the United States.

Anti-Semites often use the internet as their preferred medium, as it gives them international reach and a veil to hide behind. The rate of anti-Semitism is increasing on social media, specifically on Twitter. From August 2015-August 2016, the

Anti-Defamation League found 2.6 million tweets that included anti-Semitic language. These messages can go viral on multiple social media outlets.

A Global Forum on Anti-Semitism met in July 2016 in Buenos Aires, Argentina to create an action plan to respond to anti-Semitic attacks on an international level. They acknowledged that anti-Semitism affects not only Jews, but society at large and is a danger for democracy and western values. In September 2016, a Global Forum on Anti-Semitism convened at the United Nations. The theme of the one-day forum was that anti-Semitism is not just a Jewish problem, but rather, one that spreads to other victims. The presenters focused on a three-prong approach to eradicate anti-Semitism: education, vigilance, and coalition building.

JCRC-NY is concerned about the increase in hate crimes since Election Day. In New York City, anti-Jewish motivated hate crimes increased by nine percent from 2015-2016.

RELATIONS WITH THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

We are concerned about the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, which has adversely affected the life of the Jewish and general population in many cities in the region. The military conflict in Eastern Ukraine and deteriorating economy have contributed to displacement and impoverishment. Hundreds of Jewish refugees are struggling to meet their basic needs and require continued assistance from international and local Jewish organizations.

- The United States should continue to engage both the Ukrainian government and others to encourage peaceful resolution of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. The U.S should also continue to support the Ukrainian government on its path to reform.
- We urge Russia's cooperation in the Middle East, particularly on Iran and Syria.
- The United States should continue to partner with Azerbaijan: a secular Muslim state with a strong and vibrant Jewish community and a close ally of the U.S. and Israel.

The United States should pursue policies in all of the countries of the former Soviet Union (FSU) based on principles that:

- promote constructive, positive and institutionally-robust, long-term relationships, despite leadership changes and the persistence of contentious or outstanding issues;
- promote freedom of the press and other critical democratic institutions;
- persuade FSU countries — which include moderate Muslim governments with full diplomatic relations with Israel — to oppose biased, anti-Israel UN resolutions and efforts to delegitimize Israel; and

- encourage the development of new strategies to: support human rights, oppose anti-Semitism and xenophobia, enforce existing laws targeting violent extremists, expand local law enforcement training and grassroots civil society development, increase restitution of Jewish communal property, and create cultural and educational opportunities for minorities. *In cooperation with the NCSEJ.*

SURVIVORS WORLDWIDE

Some progress was made in recent years regarding the restitution of, or compensation for, formerly Jewish-owned property confiscated during the Holocaust and/or subsequently nationalized by communist regimes. For example, in February 2016, following two years of negotiations with the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO) and the local Jewish community, Serbia passed a law restituting heirless Jewish Holocaust-era property. The legislation will provide €950,000 annually for 25 years to revitalize the Serbian Jewish communities and enable the communities to file claims for the return of certain heirless properties. Over the next 10 years, at least 20 percent of the proceeds from the compensation and property restitution will be directed to assist Serbian Holocaust survivors, whether living in Serbia or abroad.

Also in 2016, Romania passed legislation to prioritize the processing of private property claims filed by Holocaust survivors over a decade ago, as well as to resolve issues that delayed the return of two important categories of Jewish communal properties. The Caritatea Foundation (comprised of representatives from the local Jewish community and the WJRO) uses the proceeds from the restitution of Jewish communal properties to assist Romanian survivors around the world, support the Romanian Jewish community, and preserve Romanian Jewish culture.

The launch of the Child Survivor Fund, one of several direct compensation programs administered by the Claims Conference, in 2015 acknowledges the suffering of Holocaust survivors who endured unimaginable trauma in their childhoods. The fund, open to victims of Nazi persecution persecuted as Jews and born on or after January 1, 1928, issues one-time payments of €2,500 (approximately \$3,125). As of mid-January 2017, the Claims Conference had issued this one-time payment to approximately 67,000 Holocaust survivors, for a total distribution under this fund of \$209 million. The Child Survivor Fund payments are part of the approximately \$450 million in compensation that the Claims Conference annually distributes directly to Holocaust survivors worldwide.

The Claims Conference also continues to fund organizations around the world that provide critical social services, including homecare, for Jewish victims of Nazi persecution. For 2016, the Claims Conference made grants — from funds obtained through negotiations with the German government, the recovery of unclaimed property in what formerly was East Germany, and

from several other sources — of over \$400 million. Funding increases were negotiated to cover 2017 and 2018.

The *Holocaust Expropriated Art Recovery (HEAR) Act* that became Federal U.S. law at the end of 2016 strengthened the cooperative efforts of the Claims Conference and the WJRO with respect to looted art, Judaica and cultural property. The 2015 *Report Concerning Current Approaches of United States Museums to Holocaust-Era Art Claims* promotes three merit-based resolutions of Holocaust-era claims against U.S. museums: encouraging U.S. museums to live up to the spirit of the Washington Conference Principles, Terezin Declaration and the Guidelines of the American Alliance of Museums (AAM); having the AAM ensure compliance of its member museums by withholding accreditation; and enacting legislation to extend statutes of limitations for Holocaust-era restitution claims. Projects on looted libraries included added information on the many plundered libraries of the Jews of France sent to Minsk. The first ever internet publication of Jewish postwar art claims by the Origins Unknown Agency of the Netherlands and the first ever publication by a museum in the former Soviet Union of a full list of the artworks in its collection acquired from the postwar Soviet Trophy Brigades increase the provenance information on art. *In cooperation with the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany and the World Jewish Restitution Organization.*

JEWISH CEMETERIES ABROAD

Jewish history, religion and culture mandate the protection of Jewish cemeteries against desecration and that they should be maintained in perpetuity. In too many countries, all too often, this is not the case. We welcome efforts to identify, protect and memorialize the mass graves of Holocaust victims. JCRC-NY supports efforts to protect all these sacred sites from development or any other activity or use which desecrates them. We welcome the collaboration of the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, a valuable partner in such efforts. *In cooperation with Asra Kadisha.*



The Claims Conference and the WJRO initiate and support wide-ranging efforts toward the restitution of Jewish-owned art, Judaica, and other cultural property lost and plundered during the Holocaust.

Photos courtesy of the Claims Conference and the National Archive.

CYBERSECURITY IS A MAJOR PRIORITY

This past year, cybercrime's destructive role became evident in the political sphere. According to *Forbes*, cybercrime costs quadrupled between 2013 and 2015, and they predict another quadrupling from 2015 to 2019. Governments, businesses and nonprofit organizations all face cyber-threats from state-sponsored hackers, hackers for hire, global cyber-syndicates, and terrorists seeking state secrets, trade secrets, technology, ideas and private information. Jewish organizations seem to be a preferred target of many cyber-vandals.

The *Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA)* is the primary federal law against hacking, protecting the public against criminals who hack into computers to steal information, install malicious software, and delete files. The CFAA is woefully inadequate. We support proposals for modest, incremental changes to keep federal criminal law up to date with rapidly evolving technologies. JCRC-NY will work with our partners at the DHS, FBI and NYPD, the New York County District Attorney and other leading experts to assist Jewish organizations working to enhance their cybersecurity.

The 2015 San Bernardino attack put the focus on a related problem, "going dark." By giving smartphone users the technology to encrypt their messages and data, investigators in criminal and terrorism cases with court orders will not be able to retrieve relevant information from smartphones and other devices. JCRC-NY supports measures that would facilitate the private sector's ability to comply with appropriate, court-supervised requests, stronger privacy protections for data in the government's hands, increased transparency, and improved oversight of information collected.

HOMELAND SECURITY AND THE NONPROFIT HOMELAND SECURITY GRANTS

The shootings at the Jewish Community Center in Overland Park, the Jewish Museum in Belgium, Kehilat Bnei Torah in Jerusalem in 2014, the Main Synagogue in Copenhagen in 2015, and the stabbing at Chabad Headquarters in Brooklyn in 2014 all show that Jewish community "soft targets" continue to be at risk. The December, 2015 issue of ISIS' magazine, *Rumiyah*, features a picture of a church in Dallas with the caption, "a popular Crusader gathering place waiting to be burned down" and describes churches as "ideal targets."

New York City continues to be in the terrorists' crosshairs. New York has been the target of 21 of their plots or attacks since 1992 and nine of those incidents involved Jews or Jewish institutions. Clearly, the Jewish community has a stake in the continued effectiveness of the NYPD and other law enforcement agencies.

The mass shootings across the country and in Europe show the vulnerability of "soft targets" and the absolute necessity of

security, awareness, planning and preparedness. We support efforts to make additional resources available to protect children from all schools: public, private and parochial, and the integration of nonprofits into overall homeland security preparedness and response efforts.

The effectiveness of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's *Nonprofit Security Grant Program* is clear. We are thankful for the New York delegation's longstanding support for the program and urge its expansion.

REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE

Gun violence continues to plague the nation, but despite our efforts, NY cannot reduce gun violence alone. A recent Gallup poll showed that 86 percent of the respondents favor requiring universal background checks for all gun purchases in the U.S. We support national efforts to close background check loopholes to keep guns out of dangerous hands, ban military-style assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, increase access to mental health services, and to take other common-sense steps to reduce gun violence and to make schools and communities safer.

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Robust public-private collaboration will prove crucial to finding solutions to the threat posed by a rapidly changing climate. Renewable and alternative energy technologies are fundamental elements in the efforts to increase America's energy security and address the long-term challenge of global climate change. Some of the most interesting energy-related innovations capitalize on Israel's leadership in developing renewable and alternative energy sources. Joint cooperative ventures between American and Israeli businesses should be encouraged. JCRC-NY supports policies that encourage sustainability, greenhouse emission reduction, the effective management of the strategic petroleum reserve, energy diversification, and alternative fuel sources.



Jewish centers across the U.S. received dozens of bomb threats in January, with evacuations affecting participants ranging from infants to seniors. Jewish institutions face ongoing security challenges which highlight the need for the Nonprofit Homeland Security Grants.

Photo credit: Angie Arnold, Facebook.



Photo reproduced with permission from United Jewish Appeal-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, Inc.

At UJA-Federation of New York, our caring hand provides access to crucial human services to all New Yorkers, whoever they are. We mobilize the Jewish community to become a source of care that embraces the poor, the elderly, children and adults with special needs, and the unemployed across the economic spectrum. The following issues reflect our concerns.

SUPPORT FOR HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

The New York area is home to almost half the approximately 100,000 Holocaust survivors living nationwide, as estimated by Selfhelp Community Services. Holocaust survivors number among the poorest of low-income Jews in New York City. Many exist month-to-month on fixed incomes that do not accommodate escalating food prices, rent, utility bills and the cost of medication and other vital supports. Almost three-quarters of these frail elderly individuals live alone. Their challenges, posed by advanced age, compound the physical and emotional horrors endured during the war.

Aging Holocaust survivors have needs similar to those of other older Americans, but survivors respond differently to aspects of institutionalized care due to their distinct histories. Institutionalization increases the risk of depression, social isolation and poor outcomes, which can be emotionally and physically devastating as a trigger of the traumas they experienced during the Holocaust. Home-and-community-based services and a plan to age-in-place (sensitive to the

adversity survivors experienced) are essential components of the quality of care they receive in the remaining years of their lives.

The 2014 inception of a five-year federal project for supportive services for Holocaust survivors is deeply gratifying. The program leverages public-private partnership opportunities with nonprofits, foundations, and the private sector to address the unique needs of the survivor population. We are very proud that two of our agencies, Selfhelp Community Services and the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, received grants to provide such services in New York.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Community Living entered into this cooperative agreement with the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) to carry out the \$5 million, five-year initiative. Ninety percent of the funding provides direct services at the local level, and the federal funding is supplemented

through a 40 percent local match. In fiscal years 2015 and 2016, Congress appropriated \$2.5 million, or half the annual amount intended.

We believe the unmet demand for survivor assistance services provides strong justification for Congress to fully fund the program at \$5 million annually. Further, the project will also pave the way for the applicability of appropriate supportive services for other aging victims of trauma, such as refugee populations and victims of natural disasters.

ALLEVIATING POVERTY

One in four people in the New York lives in a poor household; one in five people lives in a poor Jewish household. UJA-Federation believes it is an essential role of government to serve the poor and near poor providing a bulwark against extreme poverty and privation. Since the Depression era, the United States has developed a set of supports to help low-income families, seniors, children and people with disabilities make ends meet and obtain health care. Research substantiates that these services lift millions of Americans out of poverty, help “make work pay” by supplementing low wages, and enable Americans who could not otherwise afford it to receive health care. Community services must be sustained to provide supportive assistance so that the most vulnerable in our society are protected. Too many Americans cannot subsist without the government’s safety net. UJA-Federation continues our work with all levels of government to ensure that New York’s social service network has the resources necessary to meet the intractable difficulties of the most vulnerable among us.

In the United States today, approximately 2.5 million children are homeless, according to a recent report of the National Center on Family Homelessness. Almost 20 percent of our children are indigent — they remain the age group suffering the most poverty. Further, there are more than 7.1 million children living in extreme poverty — children who live below \$9,142 per year for a three-person family. Child poverty is estimated to cost the United States over \$500 billion each year, as homeless and hungry kids are more prone to have health problems; less likely to succeed in school and work; and more likely to end up in the criminal justice system.

We believe it is critical to ensure funding for the *Community Development Block Grant*, the *Community Services Block Grant* and the *Social Services Block Grant*. They are essential social service programs that serve the most disadvantaged Americans and provide necessary funding to meet the growing demands put on nonprofit agencies. Despite the profound need for social services for those who have lost their jobs, homes, health care and food security, we are concerned that these programs will

again be on the cutting block this year. We urge that they be vigorously supported.

EMERGENCY FOOD AND SHELTER PROGRAM

The Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) is an essential backstop to assist families and individuals facing economic emergencies. This public-private partnership between the Federal Emergency Management Agency and six national organizations (the American Red Cross, Catholic Charities USA, The Jewish Federations of North America, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, The Salvation Army and United Way Worldwide) provides crucial support to more than 14,000 nonprofit and public agencies serving 2,500 counties and cities throughout the country.

The EFSP provides income support to low-income New Yorkers on an emergency basis to prevent hunger, preserve housing, provide shelter, and support their basic energy needs. Across the country, food pantries are continuing to see unprecedented demand for help from individuals and families.

Over the past year in New York, the local providers have estimated that the EFSP supported 234 soup kitchens, food pantries and shelters, served one million meals, distributed 1.5 million bags of food, provided more than 900 nights of shelter, and distributed \$1.3 million in rent, mortgage and utility assistance.

Many UJA-Federation agencies receive funding from the EFSP program to provide emergency services to destitute clients across the metropolitan New York area. Since its inception in 1983, the EFSP has been a major unemployment and poverty safety net for millions of Americans at risk of food insecurity and homelessness as they become economically vulnerable. EFSP supplements the supports and services provided by nearly 13,000 public and nonprofit agencies across the country. We are requesting that the House and Senate Appropriations Committees maintain EFSP at \$120 million in FY 2017 in an effort to augment efforts to cope with increased homelessness and food insecurity.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Over the past few years, Congressional leaders have already supported plans that would dramatically cut the *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program). We are concerned that such efforts will again be under consideration this year. Reductions of this magnitude would end food assistance for millions of low-income families and/or cut benefits for millions of these households.

We anticipate legislative proposals to end benefits to approximately three million low-income people, as it reduces

spending for SNAP by more than \$25 billion over 10 years. Such legislation would convert SNAP into a block grant and diminish funding sharply. States would then be given the authority to decide which benefits to reduce or terminate. Given that SNAP benefits average only \$1.41 per person, per meal, and are allocated primarily to poor children, working parents, seniors, people with disabilities, and others struggling to make ends meet, there are no good choices for whom should shoulder these cuts.

Close to two-thirds of SNAP recipients are children, elderly, or disabled. Though SNAP benefits are modest, the program is the nation's most effective tool against hunger and severe hardship, particularly during economic downturns and periods of high unemployment. During the recent recession, as millions of Americans lost their jobs, SNAP responded to the increase in need and helped to avert the harshest impacts of the recession while also providing an immediate boost to the economy. According to the USDA, the estimated percentage of U.S. households that were food insecure in 2015 declined significantly from 2014, to 12.7 percent, continuing a downward trend in food insecurity from a high of 14.9 percent in 2011. The 2015 prevalence of food insecurity was still above the 2007 prerecessionary level of 11.1 percent.

Recent data show that SNAP helps 46 million low-income Americans — one in seven residents — to afford a nutritionally adequate diet via a debit card restricted to the purchase of food. The fact that 46 million Americans are eating because of SNAP testifies to the enormous need for food assistance in our nation and to SNAP's critical role in addressing it.

The U.S. Census Bureau has released data showing that SNAP lifted four million people above the official poverty line in 2012. This is the highest level on record as well as the highest percentage of the population that SNAP has moved out of poverty. According to information recently released by the U.S. Agriculture Department, 17.6 million American households — nearly 50 million people — lacked access to adequate food at some point in 2012 because they did not have enough money or other resources to meet their basic food needs.

The impact of the proposed cuts on low-income communities would be enormous, as would the increased demand on already-strained local services and charities — either jeopardizing support for other needy residents or leaving many people cut off from SNAP, without sufficient food.

We are hopeful that our Members of Congress will support the basic subsistence levels provided by SNAP and the nutritional assistance it provides. The tens of millions of Americans, including many low wage earners living in poverty and

struggling to make ends meet, should not be put at risk due to cuts in basic food assistance through SNAP.

PROTECTING THE HEALTH CARE SAFETY NET

UJA-Federation of New York is very concerned that several prominent congressional budget proposals would restructure Medicaid by capping funds flowing to states and by creating a block grant formula. Block granting or capping Medicaid funds would mean that Medicaid is no longer an entitlement, and would result in the denial of health and long-term care to millions of vulnerable Americans. Costs and liabilities would shift to the states and previously covered populations would no longer have access to vital services. Non-profit providers of care would be unable to bridge the large gaps in coverage created by the block grant.

In New York State, more than 3.4 million individuals are enrolled in Medicaid at a federal and state annual cost exceeding \$36 billion. Medicaid is a major source of revenue, not only for our nursing homes and for hospitals, but for many of the programs our agencies administer to help their frailest clients: the elderly, disabled, mentally ill, developmentally disabled and children in foster care.

We are particularly worried that the Medicaid program has already suffered the loss of billions of program dollars through legislative and administrative cuts over the past several years. Because of these cuts, non-profit providers have been compelled to provide increasing amounts of uncompensated care to the most vulnerable in our communities. Many non-profits are even now on the brink of insolvency, and forced to drastically curtail and cut back services.

A block grant or funding cap would result in an unfavorable reimbursement formula for states where inflationary adjustments for their Medicaid programs would be far below the national level of healthcare inflation and where cuts would "snowball" over a series of years by providing adjustments far below the national level of healthcare inflation, which is much higher.

Under a block grant or per capita cap proposal, states would have no choice but to sharply restrict enrollment, eligibility and benefits for populations they currently serve.

UJA-Federation has long been a proponent of reform that would serve to strengthen our nation's health care system; however, efforts to create block grants and cap funds for Medicaid would endanger the well-being of our most vulnerable individuals.

CHARITABLE GIVING

We urge Congress to adopt charitable tax incentives that

maximize philanthropic giving and endorse appropriate efforts to support the interests and mission of nonprofits.

Nonprofits across the country face unprecedented demand for services as more families are turning to them for assistance while the costs of providing those services have dramatically escalated. Shrinking levels of charitable contributions, foundation grants and public funding severely threaten the sector's ability to respond to these challenges.

As the Administration and Congress consider tax reform and contemplate caps or restrictions on itemized deductions, we strongly oppose efforts to constrain charitable deduction. Taxpayers adjust their levels of charitable contributions in response to tax code changes. Charitable deductions motivate individuals to give away a portion of their income to those in need, by encouraging taxpayers to give more funds to charities than they might otherwise, unlike the case with other itemized deductions.

No other tax provision generates as strong a positive public impact as the charitable deduction. According to Giving USA, Americans gave over \$373 billion (the highest total ever recorded over the past 60 years) to support charitable causes in 2015, much of which is claimed as a charitable tax deduction.

In addition to providing for those in need, nonprofits create jobs and leverage economic activity. Charitable organizations generate \$1.1 trillion every year in jobs and services. One in 10 U.S. workers works in the nonprofit sector, which provides 13.7 million jobs. Barriers that limit charitable giving only hinder this critical nonprofit sector. As demands on nonprofits continue to grow, we must ensure that the tax code continues to promote giving and enables charities to meet the rising demand for critical community-based services.

AUTISM

Autism is considered the fastest growing developmental disorder in the United States, occurring in as many as one in every 88 births and one out of 54 boys. The recent *Autism Speaks/Goldman Sachs* study estimated the annual cost of autism in the U.S. at \$126 billion, much of which is absorbed by individual families. Autism research remains one of the lowest funded areas of medical research in both the public and private sector, despite the increasingly high prevalence of this disorder. Although important legislation was signed into law, addressing autism spectrum disorders and authorizing investments for research, treatment and services, funding appropriation levels have not begun to reach their levels of commitment. To realize these potential benefits, Congress must appropriately support and fund critical programs at the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control,

the Health Resources and Services Administration and other federal agencies.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

Reforming the frayed immigration system remains at the forefront of national and local debate as this contentious issue arouses the passions of Americans from all walks-of-life across the political spectrum. We anticipate great controversy and debate over any proposal to reform the system.

We will continue to support comprehensive immigration reform that is in accord with UJA-Federation's principles and includes welcoming refugees fleeing oppression, legalization, a visa program for new workers, enforcement and family reunification. We will also oppose enforcement-only legislation and/or policies that neither fix our broken system nor improve security, but instead violate due process, impose hardship upon and drive further underground the 12 million undocumented immigrants living and working among us.



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