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SPECIAL DOCUMENT FILE

BARACK OBAMA AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

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*This section is intended to give readers an overview of President-elect Barack Obama’s positions on the Middle East peace process as he begins his tenure. The baseline for gauging Obama’s views may be his failed 2000 race for Congress. At that time he made statements viewed as pro-Palestinian because they urged the United States to take an “even-handed approach” toward Israeli-Palestinian peace-making. As an Illinois state senator, Obama had cultivated ties with Chicago’s Arab American community, which was partly concentrated in his state senate district. He won a U.S. Senate seat in 2004 with significant support from Chicago’s Lakeside liberals, who included leading Chicago Jewish Democrats. His position on the Arab-Israeli conflict remained an issue during the 2008 presidential race, however, and Obama made a point of laying out his positions at several points during the campaign, in contrast to his Republican challenger Sen. John McCain, who did not detail his positions.*

**A. OBAMA FOR AMERICA, “BARACK OBAMA: A STRONG RECORD OF SUPPORTING ISRAEL,” 12 JULY 2007 (EXCERPTS).**

*Obama’s first “official” policy platform after declaring his candidacy in February 2007 was distributed by letter and email to prominent American Jews by Obama’s newly appointed Middle East policy adviser and Jewish community liaison, Eric Lynn. The text, along with Lynn’s covering letter, is available online at [www.sourcewatch.org](http://www.sourcewatch.org).*

**Record of Supporting the Security, Peace, and Prosperity of Israel**

“Our job is to renew the United States’ efforts to help Israel achieve peace with its neighbors while remaining vigilant against those who do not share this vision. . . . That

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effort begins with a clear and strong commitment to the security of Israel: our strongest ally in the region and its only established democracy. That will always be my starting point. And when we see all of the growing threats in the region: from Iran to Iraq to the resurgence of al-Qa'ida to the reinvigoration of Hamas and Hizballah, that loyalty and that friendship will guide me as we begin to lay the stones that will . . . build the road that takes us from the current instability to lasting peace and security” (Speech at AIPAC Policy Forum in Chicago, 3/2/07).

***Plan to Strengthen the United States–Israel Relationship***

Barack Obama has established a strong record as a true friend of Israel, a stalwart defender of Israel’s security, and an effective advocate of strengthening the steadfast U.S.–Israel relationship. He believes that Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state should never be challenged. As a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Obama has consistently emphasized his commitment to our ally Israel, and has been an active supporter of legislation helping to ensure the support and security of the Middle East’s only established democracy. Obama continually works with a number of his colleagues in the Senate to promote a closer relationship between the U.S. and Israel on a range of fronts—security, economic, political, and cultural. . . . Senator Obama believes that our first and incontrovertible commitment in the Middle East must be to the security of Israel, America’s strongest ally in the Middle East. . . . Obama delivered the message to Palestinian university students in Ramallah that the United States would never distance itself from Israel. Before the Palestinian elections, Obama asserted that the United States would never recognize Hamas unless it renounced its fundamental mission to eliminate Israel and he continues to insist that Hamas recognize Israel, abandon violence, and abide by previous agreements made between the Palestinian Authority and Israel.

***Support Israel’s Right to Self-Defense***

During the July 2006 Lebanon war, Barack Obama stood up strongly for Israel’s right to defend itself from Hizballah raids and rocket attacks. Obama is an original cosponsor of the Senate resolution expressing support for Israel, condemning the attacks, and calling for strong action against Iran and Syria. Throughout the war, Barack Obama made clear that Israel should not be pressured into a cease-fire that did not deal with the threat of Hizballah missiles. In addition, Obama signed a letter to the European Union pressing the EU to designate Hizballah as a terrorist organization.

***Prevent Iran from Acquiring Nuclear Weapons***

. . . Consistently, Senator Obama has been outspoken regarding the growing influence of Iran in the region, especially [in] Iraq, saying, “Make no mistake—if the Iranians and Syrians think they can use Iraq as another Afghanistan or a staging area from which to attack Israel or other countries, they are badly mistaken” (Speech to Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 11/20/06). Obama has called for stronger international sanctions against Iran to persuade it to halt uranium enrichment. He is a cosponsor of the Durbin-Smith Senate bill, the Iran Counter Proliferation Act, which calls for sanctions on Iran and other countries for assisting Iran in developing a nuclear program. Believing that Americans must do more to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, Senator Obama authored

and introduced as the primary sponsor the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act in May 2007. Obama's bill makes it easier for state and local governments to divest their pension funds of companies that invest in Iran's energy sector, providing the revenue Iran uses to pursue nuclear weapons and sponsor terrorism. Divestment is a useful tool to bring additional economic pressure to bear on Iran. Senator Obama has conducted an active dialogue with a range of Israeli political leaders and security officials regarding Iran and the threat it poses to the United States and Israel.

### ***Support Foreign Assistance to Israel***

Barack Obama has consistently supported foreign assistance to Israel. He defends and supports the annual foreign aid package that involves both military and economic assistance to Israel and has advocated increased foreign aid budgets to ensure that these funding priorities are met. Additionally, he has called for sustaining the unique U.S.-Israel defense relationship by fully funding military assistance and continuing cooperative work on missile defense programs such as the Arrow.

### ***Working toward Two States Living Side by Side in Peace and Security***

Barack Obama believes in working toward a two-state solution, with both states living side by side in peace and security. To that end, Senator Obama is a cosponsor of the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006. Introduced in the wake of Hamas's victory in the Palestinian elections, this act outlaws direct assistance to any entity of the Palestinian Authority controlled by Hamas until it meets the conditions of the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations to renounce violence, recognize Israel, and agree to abide by all agreements signed by the Palestinian Authority. Obama signed a letter urging President Bush to make it clear to Palestinian leaders that terrorist groups must either disarm or be barred from the political process. Since the elections, Obama has stated that Israelis must have a true Palestinian partner for peace. . . .

### ***Helping Palestinian Families without Supporting Terrorism***

Barack Obama supports U.S. efforts to provide aid directly to the Palestinian people by bypassing any Hamas-led government that refuses to renounce violence and recognize Israel's right to exist. Obama believes that a better life for Palestinian families is good for both Israelis and Palestinians.

### ***Limit Hizballah's Influence in the Region***

[Obama] is concerned about the rapid rearming of Hizballah in Lebanon. He has called for the end of Syrian and Iranian support of Hizballah via arms shipments and funding. Obama urged the enforcement of UN resolution 1701, which demands the cessation of arms shipments to Hizballah, a resolution that Syria and Iran continue to disregard. Long before the July 2006 conflict, Barack Obama worked to limit Hizballah's influence in the region, signing a letter urging President Bush to place al-Manar, the official television station of Hizballah, on the Treasury Department's Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity list and to aggressively target organizations that aid in its broadcast.

### ***Support US-Israel Research and Development***

As a strong supporter of broadening and deepening the U.S.-Israel relationship, Barack Obama cosponsored the U.S.-Israel Energy Cooperation Act. This bill would establish a grant program to support joint U.S.-Israeli research and development efforts in the areas of alternative and renewable energy sources—a key step toward energy independence, which is very much in the national security interests of the U.S. and Israel.

### **B. SEN. BARACK OBAMA, ADDRESS TO THE 2008 AIPAC POLICY CONFERENCE, WASHINGTON, DC, 4 JUNE 2008 (EXCERPTS).**

*Past associations with pro-Palestinian groups in Chicago and frequent accusations of being a “secret Muslim” fueled skepticism within the American Jewish community concerning Obama’s policy agenda on the Middle East. Suspicions increased as Obama added President Jimmy Carter’s national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and Clinton-era Middle East adviser Robert Malley, who is perceived as critical of Israel, to his policy advising team. (In fact, Obama’s lead adviser on the Middle East was said to be Dennis Ross, Clinton’s top adviser on the Middle East and currently a consultant for the AIPAC-associated Washington Institute for Near East Policy—WINEP)*

*It was against this background that Obama addressed the annual American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee’s annual policy conference, hours after securing the Democratic party’s presidential nomination and a week before a solidarity visit to Israel. Though he did say that the “Palestinians need a state that is contiguous and cohesive and that allows them to prosper,” he immediately added that “any agreement with the Palestinian people must preserve Israel’s identity as a Jewish state” and that Jerusalem “must remain undivided,” eliciting cheers. The Jerusalem comment, which went beyond official U.S. policy, prompted a sharp rebuke from the president of the Palestinian Authority and widespread expressions of concern, leading Obama to qualify his position the following day (5 June) in an interview on CNN. Asked whether the Palestinians had any claim to the city, he replied: “Well, obviously, it’s going to be up to the parties to negotiate a range of these issues. And Jerusalem will be part of those negotiations. . . . As a practical matter, it would be very difficult to execute [a division of the city]. And I think that it is smart for us to work through a system in which everybody has access to the extraordinary religious sites in Old Jerusalem but that Israel has a legitimate claim on that city.”*

*The full text of the AIPAC speech is available online at [www.aipac.org](http://www.aipac.org).*

I know that when I visit AIPAC, I’m among friends, good friends. Friends who share my strong commitment to make sure that the bond between the United States and Israel is unbreakable today, unbreakable tomorrow, unbreakable forever. . . . [This] is rooted in more than our shared national interest, it’s rooted in the shared values and shared stories of our people. And as president, I will work with you to ensure that it is this bond that is strengthened. . . .

[In 1948,] David Ben-Gurion declared the founding of the Jewish state of Israel. We know that the establishment of Israel was just and necessary, rooted in centuries of struggle and decades of patient work. But sixty years later, we know that we cannot relent. We cannot yield. And as president, I will never compromise when it comes to Israel's security. Not when there are still voices that deny the Holocaust. Not when there are terrorist groups and political leaders committed to Israel's destruction. Not when there are maps across the Middle East that don't even acknowledge Israel's existence, and government-funded textbooks filled with hatred toward Jews. Not when there are rockets raining down on Sederot, and Israeli children have to take a deep breath and summon uncommon courage every time they board a bus or walk to school.

I've long understood Israel's quest for peace and need for security, but never more so than during [my travels to Israel] two years ago. Flying in an IDF helicopter, I saw a narrow, beautiful strip of land nestled against the Mediterranean. On the ground, I met a family who saw their house destroyed by a Katyusha rocket. I spoke to Israeli troops who faced daily threats as they maintained security near the Blue Line. I talked to people who wanted nothing more simple or more elusive than a secure future for their children.

I have been proud to be a part of a strong bipartisan consensus that has stood by Israel in the face of all threats. That is a commitment that both [Republican presidential candidate] John McCain and I share, because support for Israel in this country goes beyond party.

But part of our commitment—part of our commitment must be speaking up when Israel's security is at risk. And I don't think any of us can be satisfied that America's recent foreign policy has made Israel more secure. Hamas now controls Gaza. Hizballah has tightened its grip on southern Lebanon, and it's flexing its muscles in Beirut.

Because of the war in Iraq, Iran, which always posed a greater threat to Israel than [did] Iraq, is emboldened and poses the greatest strategic challenge, to the United States and Israel in the Middle East, in a generation.

Iraq is unstable, and al-Qa'ida has stepped up its recruitment. Israel's quest for peace with its neighbors has stalled despite the heavy burdens borne by the Israeli people. And America is more isolated in the region, reducing our strength and jeopardizing Israel's safety.

The question is how to move forward. There are those who would continue and intensify this failed status quo, ignoring eight years of accumulated evidence that our foreign policy is dangerously flawed.

And then there are those who would lay all the problems in the Middle East at the doorstep of Israel and its supporters, as if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the root of all trouble in the region. These voices blame the Middle East's only democracy for the region's extremists. . . .

Our alliance is based on shared interests and shared values. Those who threaten Israel threaten us. Israel has always faced these threats on the front lines. And I will bring to the White House an unshakable commitment to Israel's security.

That starts with ensuring Israel's qualitative military advantage. I will ensure that Israel can defend itself from any threat, from Gaza to Tehran.

Defense cooperation between the United States and Israel is a model of success and it must be deepened. As president, I will implement a memorandum of understanding that provides 30 billion [dollars] in assistance to Israel over the next decade; investments to Israel's security that will not be tied to any other nation.

First, we must approve the foreign aid request for 2009. . . . Going forward, we can enhance our cooperation on missile defense. We should export military equipment to our ally Israel under the same guidelines of NATO. And I will always stand up for Israel's right to defend itself in the United Nations and around the world.

Across the political spectrum, Israelis understand that real security can only come through lasting peace. And that is why we, as friends of Israel, must resolve to do all we can to help Israel and its neighbors to achieve it, because a secure, lasting peace is in Israel's national interest, it is in America's national interest, and it is in the interest of the Palestinian people and the Arab world.

As president, I will work to help Israel achieve the goal of two states—a Jewish state of Israel and a Palestinian state—living side by side in peace and security. And I won't wait . . . until the waning days of my presidency; I will take an active role and make a personal commitment to do all I can to advance the cause of peace from the start of my administration.

Now, the long road to peace requires Palestinian partners committed to making this journey. We must isolate Hamas unless and until they renounce terrorism, recognize Israel's right to exist, and abide by past agreements. There is no room at the negotiating table for terrorist organizations. That is why I opposed holding elections in 2006 with Hamas on the ballot.

The Israelis and the Palestinian Authority warned us at the time against holding these elections, but this administration pressed ahead. And the result is a Gaza controlled by Hamas, with rockets raining down on Israel.

The Palestinian people must understand that progress will not come through the false prophets of extremism or the corrupt use of foreign aid. The United States and the international community must stand by Palestinians who are committed to cracking down on terror and carrying the burden of peacemaking.

I will strongly urge Arab governments to take steps to normalize relations with Israel and to fulfill their responsibility to pressure extremists and provide real support for [Palestinian Authority] President [Mahmud] Abbas and Prime Minister [Salam al-] Fayyad. Egypt must cut off the smuggling of weapons in the Gaza.

And Israel can also advance the cause of peace by taking appropriate steps consistent with its security to ease the freedom of movement for Palestinians, improve economic conditions in the West Bank, and to refrain from building new settlements, as it's agreed to do with the Bush administration at Annapolis.

Now, let me be clear. Israel's security is sacrosanct. It is nonnegotiable. The Palestinians need a state—the Palestinians need a state that is contiguous and cohesive and that allows them to prosper, but any agreement with the Palestinian people must preserve Israel's identity as a Jewish state, with secure, recognized, defensible borders. And Jerusalem will remain the capital of Israel, and it must remain undivided.

Now, I have no illusions that any of this will be easy. It will require difficult decisions on both sides. But Israel is strong enough to achieve peace if it has partners who

are committed to the goal. Most Israelis and Palestinians want peace, and we must strengthen their hand.

The United States must be a strong and consistent partner in this process, not to force concessions but to help committed partners avoid stalemate and the kind of vacuums that are filled by violence. And that's what I commit to do as president of the United States.

The threats to Israel start close to home but they do not end there. Syria continues its support for terror and meddling in Lebanon. And Syria has taken dangerous steps in pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, which is why Israeli action [bombing a Syrian military installation purportedly involved in nuclear activities in September 2007—*Ed.*] was entirely justified to end that threat.

I also believe that the United States has a responsibility to support Israel's efforts to renew peace talks with the Syrians. We must never force Israel to the negotiating table. But neither should we ever block negotiations, when Israeli leaders decide that they may serve Israeli interests.

As president, I will do whatever I can to help Israel succeed in these negotiations. And success will require the full enforcement of Security Council resolution 1701 in Lebanon and a stop to Syria's support for terror. It is time for this reckless behavior to come to an end.

Now, there's no greater threat to Israel or to the peace and stability of the region than Iran. . . . And the enemies of Israel should have no doubt that regardless of party, Americans stand shoulder-to-shoulder in our commitment to Israel's security. . . .

I was interested to see Senator McCain propose divestment as a source of leverage—not the bigoted divestment that has sought to punish Israeli scientists and academics, but divestment targeted at the Iranian regime. It's a good concept, but not a new one: I introduced legislation over a year ago that would encourage states and the private sector to divest from companies that do business in Iran. . . .

And if we want real leverage over Iran, we must free ourselves from the tyranny of oil. The price . . . of a barrel of oil is one of the most dangerous weapons in the world. Petro-dollars pay for weapons that kill American troops and Israeli citizens. . . .

[We] can join Israel—building on last year's U.S.-Israeli Energy Cooperation Act—to deepen our partnership in developing alternative sources of energy. . . . The surest way to increase our leverage in the long term is to stop bankrolling the Iranian regime.

*Finally, let there be no doubt* [emphasis in original—*Ed.*]: I will always keep the threat of military action on the table to defend our security and our ally Israel. Do not be confused. Sometimes there are no alternatives to confrontation, but that only makes diplomacy more important. If we must use military force, we are more likely to succeed, and we'll have far greater support at home and abroad, if we have exhausted our diplomatic efforts.

That is the change we need in our foreign policy; change that restores American power and influence; change accompanied by a pledge that I will make known, to allies and adversaries alike, that America maintains an unwavering friendship with Israel and an unshakable commitment to its security. . . .

But we are here because of more than policy. We are here because the values we hold dear are deeply embedded in the story of Israel. Just look at what Israel has accomplished

in sixty years. . . . In the face of constant threats, Israel has triumphed. In the face of constant peril, Israel has prospered. In a state of constant insecurity, Israel has maintained a vibrant and open discourse and a resilient commitment to the rule of law.

As any Israeli will tell you, Israel is not a perfect place. But like the United States, it sets an example for all when it seeks a more perfect future. These same qualities can be found among American Jews. It is why so many Jewish Americans have stood by Israel while advancing the American story, because there's a commitment embedded in the Jewish faith and tradition to freedom and fairness, to social justice and equal opportunity, to *tikkun olam*: the obligation to repair this world.

I will never forget that I would not be standing here today if it weren't for the commitment that was made, not only in the African American community but also in the Jewish American community. In the great social movements in our country's history, Jewish and African Americans have stood shoulder to shoulder. They took buses down south together. They marched together. They bled together . . .

We must not allow the relationship between Jews and African Americans to suffer. This is a bond that must be strengthened. Together, we can rededicate ourselves to end prejudice and combat hatred in all its forms. Together, we can renew our commitment to justice. Together, we can join our voices together . . . that work must include a shared commitment to Israel.

You and I know we must do more than stand still. Now is the time to be vigilant in facing down every foe. Just as we move forward in seeking a future of peace for the children of Israel and for all children. Now is the time to stand by Israel as it writes the next chapter in its extraordinary journey. Now is the time to join together in the work of repairing this world. And I am looking forward to being a partner with AIPAC in making that happen.

**C. SEN. BARACK OBAMA, LETTER TO U.S. PRES. GEORGE W. BUSH  
REGARDING THE MIDDLE EAST, 24 JUNE 2008.**

*As the presidential campaign swung into high gear, Obama, newly tapped as the Democratic candidate and still feeling the negative effects from the controversy over his AIPAC comments on Jerusalem, sent this letter to President Bush. The letter, which essentially lays out his first fully articulated policy platform on the Arab-Israeli peace process, is available online at [www.aipac.org](http://www.aipac.org).*

Dear Mr. President:

I recently outlined my views on the Middle East in a major speech [to AIPAC; see Doc. B above], and I am writing to reiterate some of the concerns and priorities I raised in that speech.

A fundamental principle of America's Middle East policy must be our unshakeable commitment to Israel's security. I believe that it is a bipartisan commitment, and I will work to continue and advance that consensus. But I am deeply concerned that Israel's security has been put at greater risk, both because of new threats from implacable enemies like Iran, Hizballah, and Hamas and because of policy choices by the United States.

One essential step for ensuring Israel's security in the long term would be achieving a lasting peace with its neighbors. In the case of the Palestinians, that means a negotiated agreement to provide for two states living side by side in peace and security, so that both sides can achieve their legitimate aspirations. [Israeli] Prime Minister [Ehud] Olmert and [Palestinian] President [Mahmud] Abbas committed themselves to achieving this goal in the process that began at Annapolis, but they will need a sustained, concerted effort by the United States to help them succeed. In your remaining time in office, I hope you will devote the necessary resources to supporting Israel and Palestinian leaders who are committed to this effort to the maximum possible extent.

These peace efforts take place in a difficult environment. Hamas, which opposes negotiations and is committed to Israel's destruction, continues to rule in Gaza. Under their rule, thousands of rockets have been fired at civilian populations in Sederot and surrounding communities in southern Israel, causing over a dozen deaths, many injuries, and the disruptions of normal life for all who live in this area. Hamas, which is receiving funding, training, and weaponry from Iran, is acquiring longer-range missile capabilities, which enable it to strike even larger populations centers, such as Ashqelon. Although a truce went into effect last week—and we hope it will bring calm to the people of southern Israel, improve life for Palestinians in Gaza, and lead to the release of [IDF Cpl.] Gilad Shalit—the threat posed by Hamas rule has not passed, and will not pass so long as Hamas remains committed to Israel's destruction.

In the face of this threat, several firm positions are called for by the United States. First, we must reiterate that Israel has the right to defend itself from such attacks, and that the United States will stand up for that right in the United Nations and elsewhere. Second, we must press Egypt to devote more resources and effort to stopping the smuggling of weapons into Gaza from the Sinai, where most of Hamas' weaponry arrives from. This will help ensure that Hamas does not use the truce to rearm and regroup. Third, we must continue to isolate Hamas, and ensure that others do so, until and unless they recognize Israel, renounce violence, and abide by past agreements.

It is also imperative that other Arab governments step forward to give great support to the Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts. This support can take two main forms. First, these governments should deliver on their commitments to deliver large-scale financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority, enabling it to improve economic conditions for Palestinians on the ground. Saudi Arabia and the other oil-producing states of the Gulf, in particular, have the resources to make a profound investment in Israeli-Palestinian peace by helping to improve the lives of the Palestinians people, and we must urge them to do just that. The Arab states proclaim their great concern for the Palestinian people and now with unprecedented oil revenues flowing into their coffers, there is no reason not to call on the publicly to provide far more assistance to the Palestinian Authority. They can also provide important political and diplomatic support to President Abbas as he tries to reach a negotiated settlement.

Second, the Arab states should support the Palestinians and prepare their own people for peace by making gestures of normalization toward Israel. The entire regional atmosphere would improve, and peacemakers on all sides would see their efforts

enhanced, if Arab governments would reach out to Israelis with a sincere indication of their readiness to accept Israel as a legitimate nation in the Middle East.

Finally, the recent announcement that Israel and Syria have resumed their own peace negotiations is encouraging news, and it should spur the United States to support the parties' efforts to achieve their goal of a negotiated settlement. Turkey deserves praise for its role in arranging these talks, and the success of these negotiations could, among other things, be a setback for Iran's influence and Hizballah's ability to acquire advanced weaponry.

I close by urging you to redouble your efforts to help Israelis and Palestinians achieve success in their peace efforts; to stand up for Israel's right of self-defense; to press the Arab states to do more to advance the peace process; and to support the Israeli-Syrian talks. All of these steps will advance the interests of the United States and the security of our ally, Israel.

**D. HA'ARETZ, "HOW DEMOCRATIC, GOP PLATFORMS DIFFER ON ISRAEL,"  
9 SEPTEMBER 2008.**

*After the Republican National Convention in early September 2008, the Israeli daily Ha'Aretz published this backgrounder containing excerpts of the official Democratic and Republican party platforms on issue of importance to Israel. The excerpts, compiled for Israeli readers by Ha'Aretz's Bradley Burston, are available online at [www.haaretz.com](http://www.haaretz.com).*

***Jerusalem***

*Democratic:* Jerusalem is and will remain the capital of Israel. The parties have agreed that Jerusalem is a matter for final status negotiations. It should remain an undivided city accessible to people of all faiths.

*Republican:* We support Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel and moving the American embassy to that undivided capital of Israel.

***Israel's Future Borders***

*Democratic:* All understand that it is unrealistic to expect the outcome of final status negotiations to be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949.

*Republican:* Israel must have secure, defensible borders, and we support its right to exist as a Jewish state able to defend itself against homicide bombings, rocket and mortar fire, and other attacks against its people.

***The Palestinian Refugee Issue***

*Democratic:* The creation of a Palestinian state through final status negotiations, together with an international compensation mechanism, should resolve the issue of Palestinian refugees by allowing them to settle there, rather than in Israel.

*Republican:* At the heart of any peace process must be a mutual commitment to resolve all issues through negotiation. Part of that process must be a just, fair, and realistic framework for dealing with the Palestinian refugee issue.

Like all other elements in a meaningful agreement, this matter can be settled only on the basis of mutually agreed changes that reflect today's realities as well as tomorrow's hopes.

**Iran**

*Democratic:* The world must prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. That starts with tougher sanctions and aggressive, principled, and direct high-level diplomacy, without preconditions.

We will pursue this strengthened diplomacy alongside our European allies, and with no illusions about the Iranian regime. We will present Iran with a clear choice: if you abandon your nuclear weapons program, support for terror, and threats to Israel, you will receive meaningful incentives; so long as you refuse, the United States and the international community will further ratchet up the pressure, with stronger unilateral sanctions, stronger multilateral sanctions inside and outside the UN Security Council, and sustained action to isolate the Iranian regime.

The Iranian people and the international community must know that it is Iran, not the United States, choosing isolation over cooperation. By going the extra diplomatic mile, while keeping all options on the table, we make it more likely the rest of the world will stand with us to increase pressure on Iran, if diplomacy is failing.

*Republican:* We oppose entering into a presidential-level, unconditional dialogue with the regime in Iran until it takes steps to improve its behavior, particularly with respect to support of terrorism and suspension of its efforts to enrich uranium.

At the same time, the U.S. must retain all options in dealing with a situation that gravely threatens our security, our interests, and the safety of our friends.

We affirm, in the plainest words we can use, that the U.S. government, in solidarity with the international community, will not allow the current regime in Tehran to develop nuclear weapons. We call for a significant increase in political, economic, and diplomatic pressure to persuade Iran's rulers to halt their drive for a nuclear weapons capability, and we support tighter sanctions against Iran and the companies with business operations in or with Iran.

**Hamas**

*Democratic:* The United States and its Quartet partners should continue to isolate Hamas until it renounces terrorism, recognizes Israel's right to exist, and abides by past agreements.

*Republican:* We urge the continued isolation of groups like Hamas and Hizballah because they do not meet the standards of the international community.

**Palestinian Statehood**

*Democratic:* It is in the best interests of all parties, including the United States, that we take an active role to help secure a lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a democratic, viable Palestinian state dedicated to living in peace and security side by side with the Jewish State of Israel.

To do so, we must help Israel identify and strengthen those partners who are truly committed to peace, while isolating those who seek conflict and instability, and stand with Israel against those who seek its destruction.

*Republican:* We support the vision of two democratic states living in peace and security: Israel, with Jerusalem as its capital, and Palestine. For that to become a reality, the Palestinian people must support leaders who reject terror, embrace the institutions and ethos of democracy, and respect the rule of law.

### *Israel's Security*

*Democratic:* Our starting point must always be our special relationship with Israel, grounded in . . . a clear, strong, fundamental commitment to the security of Israel, our strongest ally in the region and its only established democracy.

That commitment, which requires us to ensure that Israel retains a qualitative edge for its national security and its right to self-defense is all the more important as we contend with growing threats in the region—a strengthened Iran, a chaotic Iraq, the resurgence of al-Qa'ida, the reinvigoration of Hamas and Hizballah.

We support the implementation of the memorandum of understanding that pledges \$30 billion in assistance to Israel over the next decade to enhance and ensure its security.

*Republican:* We reaffirm America's commitment to Israel's security and will ensure that Israel maintains a qualitative edge in military technology over any potential adversaries.



Palestinian bakers in Ramallah sell “Obama bread” to celebrate the senator’s victory in the U.S. presidential elections, 5 November 2008. (Abbas Momeni/AFP/Getty Images)