

Israel/Palestine Update

Messaging Toolkit

Introduction

This messaging toolkit serves as a guide for elected officials and organizational leaders to speak to their constituents and members about tragedies which have unfolded this week in Israel and Gaza. Both Jewish and non-Jewish voices are needed across the progressive ecosystem in a united call to free the American and Israeli hostages held captive in Gaza, which will guide the way to peace.

We need to ensure we are speaking with unity to urge the safe return of the innocent hostages and not embolden right-wing calls for mass violence against Gazans. Leaders on the left can help end this cycle of violence by speaking directly to their followers and voicing what many people know to be true - progressives can and should support the freeing of the hostages in this moment.

This is a rapidly evolving situation, and messaging will be updated as the facts on the ground and the political, media, and messaging atmosphere changes.

Do's and Don't

DO

- Condemn Hamas as a terrorist organization that is committed to killing Israelis and Jews.
- Acknowledge Israel's right to defend itself following a brutal terror attack on its people, while also making clear that the Palestinian people are not Hamas and Israel has an obligation to protect innocent Palestinians
- Demand the unconditional release of the Israeli and American hostages that are currently being held by Hamas in Gaza. These civilian hostages include babies, children, and grandparents.
- Highlight that the release of the hostages is an essential step toward peace.
- Condemn antisemitic, Islamophobic, anti-Arab, and other violence and hate that's spreading in the U.S. and around the globe stemming from this crisis.
- Acknowledge that many communities are in pain right now - Jews, Muslims, Arab Americans.

DON'T

- Call for a ceasefire or use similar language. A ceasefire cannot happen before the Israeli and American hostages are released.
- Use language of ethnic cleansing when referring to Israel's defense strategy in Gaza.
- Conflate the Israeli government with the Israeli people or the global Jewish community, or Hamas with the Palestinian people.

Sample talking points

- Hamas' shocking massacre in Israel on October 7th has shaken the Jewish community – and our world.
- This has been a period of immense grief, mourning the Israeli, Palestinian, and American lives lost to the war in Israel and Gaza.
- In addition to the thousands of lives lost, hundreds have been kidnapped and are being held hostage by Hamas in Gaza. This includes both Americans and Israelis - elderly people, infants and children, and entire families. With each day that passes, we grow increasingly worried for the safety of these innocent people.
- I'm joining the urgent call for the immediate, safe, and unconditional release of the 100+ American and Israeli hostages who were kidnapped by Hamas and taken to Gaza. Israel has a right to defend itself in response to this attack on its people.
- At the same time, in doing so, Israel has an obligation to protect innocent Palestinian civilians.
- Freeing the innocent Americans and Israelis held hostage in Gaza is the first step towards peace.

Additional talking points on calls for an immediate ceasefire

- A week after Hamas's brutal massacre, they continue to hold innocent Israelis and Americans hostage and use Palestinians as human shields as the devastating death toll climbs.
- In dire times like these, Israel not only possesses the right, but also the responsibility to defend itself against Hamas' terrorism.
- As President Biden rightly pointed out, Israel should abide by the international laws of armed conflict, including distinction, necessity, and proportionality, as it pursues its legitimate military objective of neutralizing the threat posed by Hamas.
- Like President Biden, I encourage Israel to demonstrate necessary restraint, consistent with the laws of war, in their retaliation against Hamas. This is essential to sparing the lives of vulnerable Palestinian civilians.
- The international community has a vested interest in upholding these standards to ensure a just and humane resolution to the conflict and end the suffering of innocent Israelis and Palestinians.
- As the humanitarian crisis in Gaza escalates rapidly, the Rafah Crossing must open as a humanitarian corridor to provide critical aid and medical supplies for Gazan civilians.
- The reality is that a ceasefire is impossible when innocent Israelis and Americans remain in captivity as hostages in Gaza. The goal of peace is only possible once these 200 hostages are finally freed.

Examples of key messages in action

- “Because hostage-taking is a war crime and a crime against humanity, the current hostage crisis is a global emergency. We must continue to demand, and work for, the immediate safe return of all 150 hostages, among them both Israelis and Americans, who are being held captive by Hamas terrorists in Gaza today.” - Congressman [Jamie Raskin](#), full statement [linked here](#).
- “Israel’s justified pursuit of justice following horrific terror attacks must not lead to blanket destruction for the people of Gaza. As we hold our breaths for a pending invasion, U.S. support must be grounded in principles of justice and human dignity.” - [Patrick Gaspard](#), Center for American Progress.
- “It’s entirely reasonable to simultaneously: -Stand with Israel, condemn Hamas’ terroristic slaughter of Israelis & Americans, demand the release of Israeli and US hostages, and express concern re: innocent civilian Palestinian & Israeli lives. We can do this.” - Representative [Jerry Nadler](#).
- “The unconscionable attacks on innocent people, including young people at a concert, babies and grandmothers, must be condemned in the strongest terms...Israel has every right to defend itself as it will now do. We are deeply worried for the safety of the Israeli people, including the hostages now in Gaza as Hamas has threatened their execution.” - American Federation of Teachers, full statement [linked here](#).
- “I am weeping with my Jewish brothers and sisters, both in Israel and around the world, as they mourn the horrific acts of terror in Israel this past weekend. The stories of civilians murdered and families kidnapped are gut-wrenching...These were not militants attacking an army, nor were they acts of protest against Israel’s policy in Gaza. They were senseless acts of violence against civilians that have destroyed the lives of human beings.” - Reverend William Barber, full op-ed [linked here](#).
- “More Jews were killed last Shabbat than in any other day since the Holocaust, and about 150 of our people, including children and old people, including lifelong peace activists, are currently being held hostage by Hamas in Gaza....Israel is now seeking to incapacitate Hamas and to bring back the hostages. Those are legitimate goals, and we must not ask Israel to refrain from pursuing them. But we must also plead, pray, and lobby that they stop doing so through indiscriminate bombing.” - Rabbi Rachel Timoner, full sermon [linked here](#).
- “We urge Israel and its allies to continue pursuing their safety and we demand that Hamas’ allies in the region press for them for the hostages’ immediate release...We mourn all the dead in Israel and Palestine. And we ache for the hundreds of thousands of displaced civilians.” - [New York Jewish Agenda](#)
- “We are capable of unequivocally condemning Hamas’ terror, supporting Israel’s right to defend itself, and demanding the unconditional release of the hostages, while also decrying the loss of

innocent Palestinian lives. In fact, all of it is necessary if we are to ever find a path towards peace."

- [Amy Spitalnick](#), Jewish Council for Public Affairs