

JCRC's Commitment to the Two-State Solution

Since its earliest years, the field of Jewish Community Relations has been guided by the goal of supporting a secure, democratic and Jewish state in the land of Israel. The JCRC of Greater Boston shared this vision, and we continue to believe that the only way to secure a lasting peace for Israel is through a two-state solution directly negotiated by Israelis and Palestinians. The current political landscape is marked in large part by frustration and despair, and this attitude has led many people to be skeptical of the prospects for peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The unfortunate reality is that many Israelis and Palestinians believe that they suffer from a lack of visionary leadership; they see their leaders as managing the moment but lacking the courage to take the bold steps needed for a brighter future. We believe that even at this time, where there may be an absence of hope and progress, there are opportunities for the Boston Jewish community to take concrete, constructive action in service of the two-state solution. **JCRC remains committed to the two-state solution, and we are renewing that commitment by launching new initiatives designed to renew hope and to maintain and expand the potential for two states.**

Politicians, intellectuals, and others have proposed alternatives to the two-state solution, each of which is untenable for a different reason. The first alternative is the continuation of the status quo: a Jewish state of Israel and limited Palestinian sovereignty in some parts of the West Bank and in Gaza. This state of affairs is defined by injustices to both parties: Palestinians live in a state of occupation and are denied their legitimate rights of self-determination, and Israelis are victimized by terror, indiscriminate rocket attacks, and a global campaign of delegitimization. Continuing the status quo will inevitably result in regular outbreaks of violence, war, and continued denial of the rights of both parties. The status quo does not bring peace to either Israelis or Palestinians, and can never definitively end a conflict that has perpetuated uncertainty and insecurity for all.

A second alternative involves a single state stretching from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River. With current demographic trends, a single state would likely include more Palestinian than Jewish citizens. With that in mind, a single state could take one of two forms: a bi-national state in which Arabs come to have a demographic majority and Jews are promised equal rights, or a single Jewish state in which Israel would annex large areas of land, including areas currently under Palestinian control. A bi-national state with a Palestinian majority would end Jewish sovereignty in our historic homeland, and would undermine the gains in equality and protection Jews around the world have experienced since Israel's creation. On the other hand, a single Jewish state would leave Israel unable to maintain its Jewish character while also fulfilling the promises issued in its Declaration of Independence, guaranteeing freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture to all its citizens. A Jewish state would endure but its democratic character would be lost. Absent a two-state solution, Israel will be forced to make an impossible choice between its Jewish and democratic identities.

The only way to avoid these outcomes and to ensure a secure, democratic and Jewish state of Israel is the two-state solution, directly negotiated by the two parties. JCRC is under no illusion that achieving a two-state agreement will be easy or is likely to be achieved in the short-term. The only people who can reach an agreement are the Israelis and Palestinians, those on the ground living with the consequences of the two-state solution or its absence. Future advances of the peace process depend on building the political will among Israelis and Palestinians, and on political leaders on both sides making compromises and taking risks for the sake of peace. JCRC is developing new initiatives that will create a community in Boston dedicated to learning about, promoting, and advancing these efforts. Among these projects, we are launching the Israel Collaborative and Boston Partners for Peace*. As JCRC reaffirms its commitment to a two-state solution, we also reaffirm our commitment to working toward that goal with the speed and diligence it demands.

*Boston Partners for Peace, a partnership between JCRC and CJP, will be launching in the coming months. It will enable people in Boston to learn about and directly support organizations working with Israelis and Palestinians on co-existence and mutual recognition efforts.