

# *the* AIEF Briefing Book

CONGRESSIONAL STAFF • DECEMBER 13-21 2014



AMERICAN  
ISRAEL  
EDUCATION  
FOUNDATION  
*The Charitable Organization  
Affiliated with AIPAC*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **INTRODUCTION**

- 2 About AIEF
- 3 Participants
- 4 Itinerary
- 12 Planning and Packing
- 14 Important Contact Information

## **WHY ISRAEL MATTERS**

- 16 Why Israel Matters—Key Principles
- 17 A Jewish Homeland and Safe Haven
- 26 A Vibrant Democracy
- 34 Israel's Government
- 42 A Force for Good in the World

## **ISRAEL IN MAPS**

# INTRODUCTION

At a time when our country faces historic challenges, including increasing global threats and turmoil in the Middle East, the unique bond between the United States and Israel is more essential than ever.

Close strategic, economic, political and diplomatic ties between the United States and Israel further U.S. interests, promote regional peace and enhance the security of both nations.

The United States and Israel share the same values and a common commitment to democracy and freedom. Israel is America's most reliable friend and democratic ally in the Middle East, one of the world's most volatile and important regions.

The American Israel Education Foundation (AIEF) Briefing Book is designed specifically as a resource for trip participants. We hope that you find this material useful, and we look forward to working closely with you in the days and weeks ahead.

## **About AIEF**

The American Israel Education Foundation (AIEF) is the charitable organization affiliated with AIPAC, American's pro-Israel lobby, and was created in 1990. AIEF makes annual grants to AIPAC that are consistent with the Foundation's status as a charitable and educational 501 (c)(3) organization, providing grants to support select educational programs including: Middle East research, educational materials and conferences, and leadership programs for university students. In addition to making grants for AIPAC programs, the Foundation funds educational seminars to Israel for members of Congress and other political influentials. These AIEF-sponsored trips help educate political leaders and influentials about the importance of the U.S. - Israel relationship through firsthand experiences in Israel, briefings by experts on Middle East affairs, and meetings with Israeli political elite.

# INTRODUCTION

## TRIP ATTENDEES

Christopher Barr, Legislative and Research Assistant for Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ)

Piper Crowell, Legislative Director, Rep. Jared Huffman (D-CA)

Sean Duggan, Military Legislative Assistant, Rep. Niki Tsongas (D-MA)

Walter Gonzales, Legislative Director, Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD)

Donnica Hawes-Saunders, Legislative Assistant, Rep. Joyce Beatty (D-OH)

Sean Joyce, Legislative Director, Rep. Bill Shuster (R-PA)

Rachel Kelly, Deputy Chief of Staff, Rep. Jim Himes (D-CT)

Patrick Large, Legislative Director, Rep. Steven Palazzo (R-MS)

Miguel Mendoza, Legislative Director, Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL)

Kerry O'Brien, Senior Legislative Assistant, Rep. Bill Keating (D-MA)

Dan Roth, Communications Director, Rep. Karen Bass (D-CA)

John Ryan, Counsel for Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ)

Dan Sadlosky, Policy Advisor, House Majority Whip Steve Scalise (R-LA)

Devon Seibert, Legislative Director, Rep. David McKinley (R-WV)

Tom Stewart, Legislative Director, Rep. Elizabeth Esty, (D-CT)

James Walsh, Legislative Assistant, Rep. Ted Yoho (R-FL)

James Zumwalt, Legislative Assistant, Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL)

## STAFF

Amy Ben Dov, Tour Guide, Israel

Ilana Decker, Educational Seminar Leader, Israel

Julie Peretz, Israel Seminars Director, Washington, D.C.

# INTRODUCTION

## Itinerary

### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2014

5:45 PM Depart Washington, D.C.

7:09 PM Arrive Newark

10:45 PM Depart Newark

### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2014

4:20 PM Arrive at Ben Gurion Airport  
Transfer to Jerusalem

6:30 PM Check in to the Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem

7:45 PM Depart for Dinner

8:00 PM *Welcome and Orientation*  
-at Spoons

8:30 PM *State of the Nation*  
Opening Dinner with David Horovitz  
Founding Editor, *The Times of Israel*  
-at Spoons

10:00 PM *Shalom Jerusalem – Introduction to the History of Jerusalem*  
Walking Tour

10:30 PM Overnight at the Inbal Jerusalem

### MONDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2014

7:45 AM Breakfast is served

8:00 AM *Israel's Political Map*  
Breakfast with Gil Hoffman  
Chief Political Correspondent and Analyst, *The Jerusalem Post*  
-at the hotel

9:15 AM Depart for strategic tour of Jerusalem

## INTRODUCTION

- 9:45 AM     *Strategic Tour of Jerusalem, Part One*  
Historic and Holy Basin, including City of David
- 12:30 PM    Lunch at Golden Panoramic
- 1:30 PM     Depart
- 2:00 PM     *Strategic Tour of Jerusalem, Part Two*  
Post-1967 Neighborhoods and Security barrier
- 3:30 PM     Depart
- 4:00 PM     *Democracy in Action: Meeting with Members of Knesset*  
                  Dov Lipman, Yesh Atid  
                  Staf Shafir, Labor  
                  Ayelet Shaked, Bayit Yehudi  
                  -at the Knesset
- 5:15 PM     Depart for hotel
- 7:00 PM     Depart for dinner
- 7:30 PM     *Israel Democracy at Work*  
Dinner with Knesset Staffers  
-at Darna
- 9:30 PM     Overnight at the Inbal Jerusalem  
Prepare for next day's departure

### TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2014

- 7:30 AM     Check out
- 7:45 AM     Breakfast on own at the hotel
- 8:30 AM     Depart for Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial and Museum
- 8:45 AM     *Remembering the Victims of the Holocaust*  
Guided Tour of Yad Vashem
- 11:00 AM    Depart

# INTRODUCTION

- 11:30 AM *Hand in Hand*  
Visit to Yad b'Yad (Hand in Hand), Bilingual School for Jewish and Arab students
- 12:45 PM Depart for the American Colony Hotel
- 1:15 PM *The Palestinian Perspective*  
Lunch with Representatives of the Palestinian Authority  
-at the American Colony Hotel
- 2:30 PM Depart
- 3:00 PM *A View from the Prime Minister's Office*  
Meeting with Mark Regev  
Chief Spokesman, Prime Minister of Israel  
-at Crowne Plaza hotel
- 4:00 PM *A View into the Palestinian Street*  
Meeting with Eran Zinger  
Arab Affairs Analyst, Israel Radio  
-at Crowne Plaza hotel
- 5:15 PM Meeting ends / depart for Tel Aviv
- 6:45 PM Check in to the Sheraton Hotel, Tel Aviv
- 7:45 PM Depart for dinner
- 8:00 PM *Start-up Nation*  
Dinner With  
Ariel Beery, CEO, MobileOCT  
Tzameret Feurst, Chief Executive Officer, PrePex  
Erez Na'aman, Engineering and Business Development, OrCam  
Sivan Yaari, Founder and President of Innovation: Africa  
-at the Olive Leaf
- 9:30 PM Overnight at the Sheraton Tel Aviv

# INTRODUCTION

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2014

- 7:45 AM Breakfast on own
- 8:30 AM Depart
- 9:00 AM *People to People Connections*  
Visit and Briefing at The Peres Center for Peace  
-Peres Peace House, Jaffa
- 10:30 AM Depart/ travel south
- 11:45 AM *Strategic tour of Israel's border with the Gaza Strip*  
-Overlook into Gaza at Kibbutz Nir-Am  
-Kassam rockets "graveyard"
- 1:15 PM *Life under the Threat of Missiles*  
Visit and lunch at Kibbutz Kfar Aza  
Meet with local resident Chen Abrahams
- 2:30 PM Depart
- 3:15 PM *Israel's Missile Defense System*  
Visit to Iron Dome Battery  
Briefing by an IDF Officer  
-at Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Base
- 4:00 PM Depart for Tel Aviv
- 5:15 PM *Regional Threats Overview*  
Coffee with Jonathan Spyer, Middle East Analyst  
- at the hotel
- 7:15 PM Depart for dinner
- 7:45 PM *Israelis from Different Walks of Life*  
Liat Damoza, The Jewish Agency  
Ari Eitan, Presentense  
Dan Slyper, LGBTQ activist  
-at Liliyot



## INTRODUCTION

9:45 PM Overnight at Sheraton Tel Aviv  
Prepare for next day's departure

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2014

7:30 AM Check out

7:45 AM Breakfast served  
- at the hotel

8:00 AM *The Iranian Threat*  
Meeting with Dr. Emily Landau  
Senior Research Associate, Institute for National Security Studies (INSS)  
- at the hotel

9:15 AM Depart / travel north

10:15 AM *Israel's Narrow Waist – Strategic Concerns*  
Briefing at the Alfei Menashe overlook

11:00 AM Depart

12:30 PM Lunch en route  
- at Adelina

1:30 PM Depart

2:00 PM *Israel's Northern Border Concerns – Part One*  
Briefing on the Israel-Lebanon Border  
-at Dovev outlook

2:45 PM Depart  
En route briefings:  
*The Jezreel Valley – The strategic land bridge connecting Asia and Africa*  
*Upper Galilee – Potential for development*

3:30 PM *Tikkun Olam – Repairing the World*  
Medical Care for Syria's Wounded  
Visit to Ziv Medical Center

4:45 PM Depart

## INTRODUCTION

- 5:15 PM Check in to Nof Ginosar Hotel
- 7:45 PM Depart for dinner
- 8:00 PM Dinner  
- at Decks
- 9:30 PM Overnight at Nof Ginosar Tiberias  
Prepare for next day's departure

### FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2014

- 7:45 AM Check-out
- 8:00 AM Breakfast on own
- 8:45 AM Depart
- 9:00 AM *Historical Significance of the Sea of Galilee*  
Tour of historical and religious sites around the Sea of Galilee  
Galilee Boat Museum  
Mt. of Beatitudes – Sermon on the Mount  
St. Peter's Church  
Capernaum – Jesus' Village
- 11:00 AM Depart for Golan Heights
- 12:00 PM *Israel's Northern Border Concerns – Part Two*  
Strategic survey of Israel's border with Syria
- 1:30 PM Lunch  
- at Habokrim
- 3:00 PM Depart  
Travel back to Jerusalem  
En route briefings:  
*Strategic survey – Israel's border with Jordan*  
*The Jordan Valley – Israel's defensive buffer facing east*

## INTRODUCTION

- 6:00 PM Check in to the Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem
- 7:15 PM Depart for dinner
- 7:30 PM *Reflections on the Sabbath in Jerusalem*  
Traditional Sabbath Eve dinner with Professor Gil Troy and family  
- at their home in Jerusalem
- 10:00 PM Overnight at the Inbal Jerusalem

### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2014

- 7:30 AM Breakfast on own at the hotel
- 8:30 AM Depart  
En route briefing:  
*Israel's experience in fighting the encroachment of desertification*
- 10:00 AM *History and Geopolitics of the Roman Empire*  
Guided tour of the National Archeological Park at Masada
- 12:30 PM *Exploration of the Dead Sea region*  
Lunch  
- at Hod Hotel
- 2:30 PM Depart / travel back to Jerusalem
- 4:00 PM Return to hotel / pack for departure  
Check out
- 5:45 PM Depart for closing dinner
- 6:45 PM *The U.S.-Israel Relationship: Bringing it All Together*  
Closing dinner  
- at Ester's
- 8:30 PM Dinner ends / depart for the airport
- 11:10 PM Depart Tel Aviv

# INTRODUCTION

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2014

4:30 AM Arrive Newark

9:01 AM Depart Newark

10:23 AM Arrive Washington, D.C.

# INTRODUCTION

## Planning and Packing

### What to Pack

The average temperature in Israel in December fluctuates between 50-65 degrees. Overall, winters are mild with the possibility of rain. Tel Aviv and the south tend to be warmer, while Jerusalem and the north can be chilly at night. Pack a light rain coat or jacket and a few sweaters.

The schedule on Monday and Tuesday is a combination of meetings and touring, so business attire is appropriate. A suit is not necessary - gentlemen can wear slacks and a blazer; ladies can wear pants/skirt and a blouse or a dress. Business-casual attire is appropriate for Wednesday and Thursday, and casual attire is appropriate for Friday and Saturday. You can leave your jacket and a change of shoes on the bus while touring. Visits to religious sites on Monday and Friday require arms and knees to be covered, and do not allow shorts. Please bring a scarf to cover your shoulders during these visits. Finally, bring a bathing suit for our visit to the Dead Sea.

### Do Not Forget

- Personal/tourist passport
- Print out of e-ticket confirmation
- Prescription medication
- Credit cards, ATM cards and American cash for personal expenses
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Camera
- Two prong adapters for appliances (110v to 220v)
- Travel friendly suitcase (3 hotels)

### Security

Security procedures at the airport are stringent. You will be asked a series of routine questions on your way into and out of Israel.

# INTRODUCTION

## Expenses

As the trip sponsor, AIEF will cover official travel-related expenses such as flights, hotels, tours, and meals that are part of the official trip. AIEF will not cover personal expenses including international phone calls, health club fees, shopping, postage, etc. Additional tours, meals, and hotel stay prior to and after the official trip are also not covered by AIEF. In accordance with Senate ethics rules, AIEF is not permitted to purchase alcohol for Senate staff.

As a tourist in Israel, you are not required to pay tax on purchases over \$100. If you spend more than \$100 in a store, please ask for a green and white VAT form. The store will attach your receipt to the form. You will use these forms to receive a cash refund at Ben Gurion Airport.

At the airport: If you pack your purchased items in your carry-on luggage you can obtain your tax refund at the VAT counters inside the terminal once you pass through security. If your items are in your checked luggage, you must present them at the VAT counter before check-in and have your forms stamped. Then, you can present your forms to the VAT counter inside the terminal.

## Money

The New Israeli Shekel (NIS) is Israel's currency. There are approximately four shekels per one U.S. dollar, but it fluctuates from day to day. ATM's are readily accessible, and most places accept credit cards. You may need cash for gifts and incidentals. You will also need a credit card for hotel incidentals.

## Personal Electronic Devices

If you would like to bring a cell phone or other personal electronic device such as a laptop or iPad, please check with your local service provider for their international rates. You can rent an international cell phone, Air Card and Mifi from [www.travelcell.com](http://www.travelcell.com).

## Helpful Websites

AIPAC: [www.aipac.org](http://www.aipac.org)

The Times of Israel: [www.timesofisrael.com](http://www.timesofisrael.com)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs: [www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/](http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/)

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy: [www.washingtoninstitute.org](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org)

Israel 21C: [www.israel21c.org](http://www.israel21c.org)



## WHY ISRAEL MATTERS

Israel is a vibrant democracy that, like the United States, stands out as a leading force for good in the world. Israel also serves a unique role as a sanctuary for Jews from around the world and the central focus of the Jewish faith.

## WHY ISRAEL MATTERS

### Why Israel Matters—Key Principles

---

**A FORCE FOR GOOD IN THE WORLD:** In spite of unprecedented threats from its neighbors, Israel in just 65 years has become a model of innovation, creating new technologies that have improved the quality of life and cured diseases of millions of people. Israel has provided disaster and humanitarian assistance to countless nations.

**FELLOW DEMOCRACY:** Israel serves as an exemplar of democracy, pluralism and rule of law in a region dominated by authoritarian regimes.

**ANCIENT JEWISH HOMELAND:** The Jewish people established its first independent political entity in the land of Israel some 3,000 years ago, and has maintained a continuous presence there ever since.

**VITAL SAFE HAVEN:** After the Jewish people endured millennia of exile and persecution, the new Jewish state has served as a safe haven for Jewish refugees from around the world.

**FULFILLMENT OF THE ZIONIST DREAM:** Israel's national revival enabled the Jewish people to exercise their right to self-determination, with the commitment to ensure the rights of all Israeli citizens.



## A Jewish Homeland and Safe Haven

The Jewish people reestablished the State of Israel in 1948, nearly 2,000 years after the destruction of an independent Jewish commonwealth in the Holy Land. Israel was intended as a safe haven for world Jewry—an urgent necessity following the Holocaust’s eradication of 6 million Jews.

### KEY POINTS

---

- The Jewish people established its first independent political entity in the land of Israel some 3,000 years ago.
- In 1948, the Jewish people reestablished the Jewish state, in part to serve as a safe haven for Jewish refugees from around the world after millennia of exile and persecution.
- Israel has made it a priority to absorb Jewish refugees from around the world.
- Since its establishment, Israel has been forced to struggle for survival and recognition.
- Long before the State of Israel was formally established, Congress vigorously advocated for a Jewish home in the Holy Land.
- Congress has recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital in resolutions and law.

## WHY ISRAEL MATTERS

### **The Jewish Connection to Israel Dates Back More Than 3,000 Years**

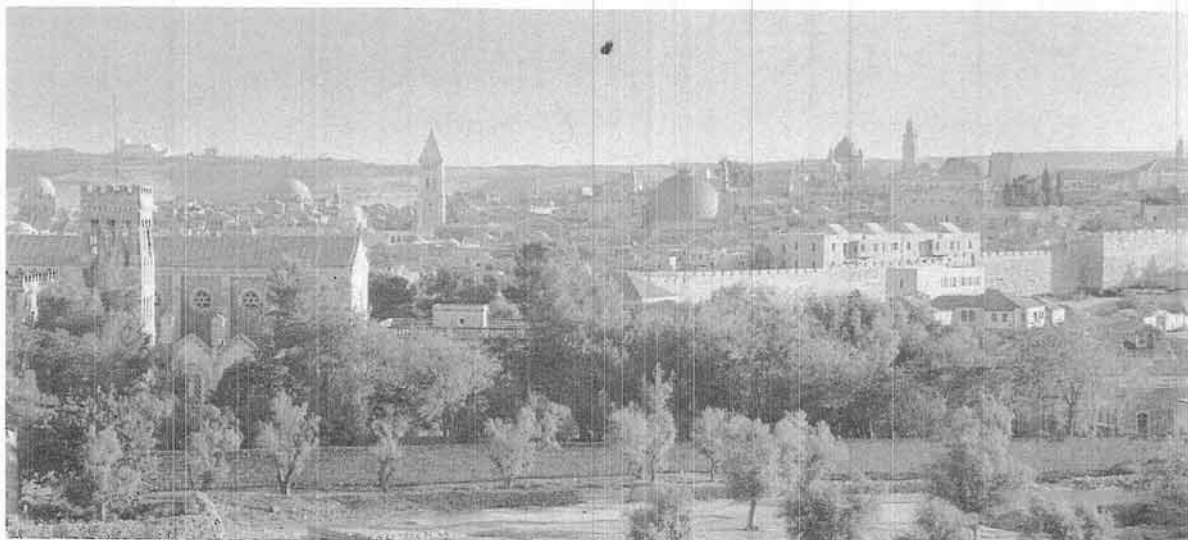
The Jewish connection to the land of Israel began in the earliest days of Jewish history. Jews have had a continuous presence there for more than 3,000 years and established their first independent political entity there around 1000 BCE. While foreign armies conquered the land of Israel in subsequent centuries, they were never able to break the link between the Jewish people and the Holy Land. Despite millennia of exile and persecution, Jews always believed that Israel was their homeland.

In 1948, the Jewish people reestablished the Jewish state. Based on the fundamental tenet of Zionism—that Jews must enjoy the right to self-determination in their own land—Israel has served as a refuge for Jews from around the world and as a focal point for Jewish aspirations. Israel's citizens have built a country based on the principles of freedom and democracy for all its citizens, fulfilling both a political and historic imperative.

### **Building a New Nation in an Ancient Land**

The memory of Israel and the desire to return to the ancient Jewish homeland remained central parts of the faith after most Jews were forced to flee Israel following the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE.

The religious yearning of Jews to return to their land ultimately spawned the political movement of Zionism in the 19th century, when European anti-Semitism, in the form of



The Zionist movement of the 19th century highlighted the need for Jews to return to their ancient homeland.

persecution and massacres, presented Jews with an existential choice. Many Jews came to believe that they would only escape discrimination and murder in a state of their own. One of the first and most outspoken proponents of Zionism was Theodor Herzl, a prominent Austrian journalist. In the late 1890s, Herzl helped rally both religious and secular Jews around the idea that a viable Jewish state could be reestablished in the historic land of Israel.

The Zionists sought international backing for their quest to form a new political entity in the land of their ancestors—a sparsely populated desert wasteland described in the 1860s by Mark Twain as “a desolate country...given over wholly to weeds—a silent mournful expanse.” In a major political victory for the Zionists, the British, with the support of Congress, issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917. In that Declaration, Great Britain pledged to facilitate the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. On that basis, the League of Nations awarded Britain the Mandate for Palestine in 1920.

### **Holocaust Increases the Urgency to Establish a Jewish State**

Less than three decades later, the genocide of Europe’s Jews clearly demonstrated the vital need for a safe Jewish refuge. Trapped and with nowhere to flee, 6 million Jews—a stunning third of the world’s Jewish population—were systematically murdered during the Holocaust. The Nazis killed Jews in massacres, at such sites as Babi Yar and in death camps like Auschwitz. After the war, hundreds of thousands of homeless survivors remained in Displaced Persons camps. President Harry Truman was among the most prominent international leaders urging increased immigration of Jews to Mandatory Palestine.

In 1947, the United Nations voted to partition Palestine into two states—one Arab and one Jewish. Even though more than half of the area allocated for the Jewish nation was desert, the Jewish community in Palestine immediately accepted the compromise. The Arabs rejected the plan, and five Arab armies invaded Israel, openly seeking to abort the creation of Israel.

### **A New Nation Struggles for Survival**

Since its establishment in 1948, Israel has been waging a struggle for survival. Israel has faced hostile neighbors with numerically superior armed forces and has been forced to contend with the constant threat of terrorism.

In its early years, Israel fought three defensive wars against its Arab adversaries: in 1948, 1956 and 1967. After the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel controlled territory that included the Sinai

## WHY ISRAEL MATTERS

Peninsula (later returned to Egypt), the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip (evacuated in 2005) and the West Bank, as well as the Old City of Jerusalem. The united city is Israel's capital, and Israel has opened the city to all—protecting and guaranteeing access to Christian, Muslim and Jewish holy sites.

More than six decades after its establishment, Israel must still fight to justify its own existence. Calls for Israel's destruction still resonate in Iran and parts of the Arab world, and the United Nations, which helped found the modern State of Israel, has often become the forum for efforts to delegitimize Israel.

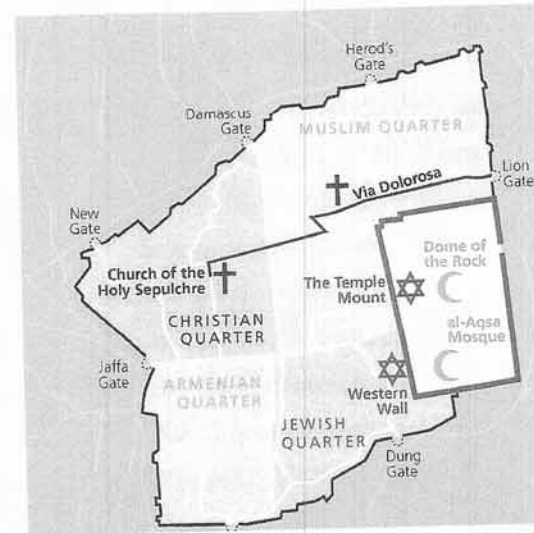


Just three years after the atrocities of the Holocaust, Zionist leader David Ben-Gurion declared the establishment of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948.

## An Ancient Capital is Reestablished

The new modern State of Israel established its capital in Jerusalem, the holiest city of the Jewish people that has served as its spiritual and religious capital for 3,000 years. Today, Jerusalem is Israel's largest city—not a “settlement,” as the Palestinians and others charge—and a dynamic and multicultural metropolis. Congress has regularly recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in various resolutions and law.

King David established the city as the capital of ancient Israel, and his son Solomon built the First Jewish Temple on what became known as the Temple Mount. This Temple became the focal point of ancient Judaism, drawing religious pilgrims from throughout the region. There are more than 850 references to Jerusalem in the Hebrew Bible and innumerable references to the city throughout more than



Between 1948 and 1967, Jordan denied Israeli Jews access to the Old City and Western Wall, one of the holy sites in Judaism.

## WHY ISRAEL MATTERS

2,000 years of post-biblical literature.

Even after the destruction of the Second Temple by the Roman Empire, Jews maintained a continuous presence in Jerusalem. Jerusalem has been central to Jews in their dreams and prayers. For 2,000 years, Jews prayed for the rebuilding of the Holy City, and to this day, Jews throughout the world face Jerusalem and pray for peace to return to this holy place. The centuries-old Jewish dream of reestablishing Jerusalem as the Jewish capital was partially realized in 1948, when the western half of the city became the capital of the new State of Israel. However, the 1949 armistice following Israel's War of Independence left



Israel protects and guarantees access to Christian, Muslim and Jewish holy sites located inside the ancient walls of Jerusalem's Old City.

Jerusalem divided between Israel and Jordan.

Between 1948 and 1967, Jordan severely limited access for non-Israeli Jews to Judaism's holiest sites and completely denied any access for Israeli Jews to the Old City or the Western Wall, a key remnant of the Second Temple. Furthermore, Christians living in Israel were allowed to visit churches and holy sites in eastern Jerusalem only once a year. Thousands of Jews, some of whose families had been living there for centuries, were expelled from eastern Jerusalem. After the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel immediately abolished Jordanian restrictions on access to the city, allowing all Jews, Christians and Muslims to worship at their holy places. Israel later incorporated the eastern half of the city and declared the unified Jerusalem to be the capital of Israel.

### A Home for Immigrants From Around the World

While combating these challenges, Israel has forged a unified nation from an incredibly diverse population of immigrants. Israel nearly doubled its populace as it welcomed more than half a million immigrants in its first years. The overwhelming majority were either survivors of the Holocaust or from Jewish communities forced to flee the Arab world. Since its founding, the tiny Jewish state has absorbed millions of immigrants from more than 100 countries. Today, Israel serves as a safe haven for



During its infancy, the new Jewish state absorbed more than 500,000 refugees from European and Arab countries.

Jews from the former Soviet Union, Ethiopia and those still fleeing persecution, such as the remnants of the Jewish community in Yemen.

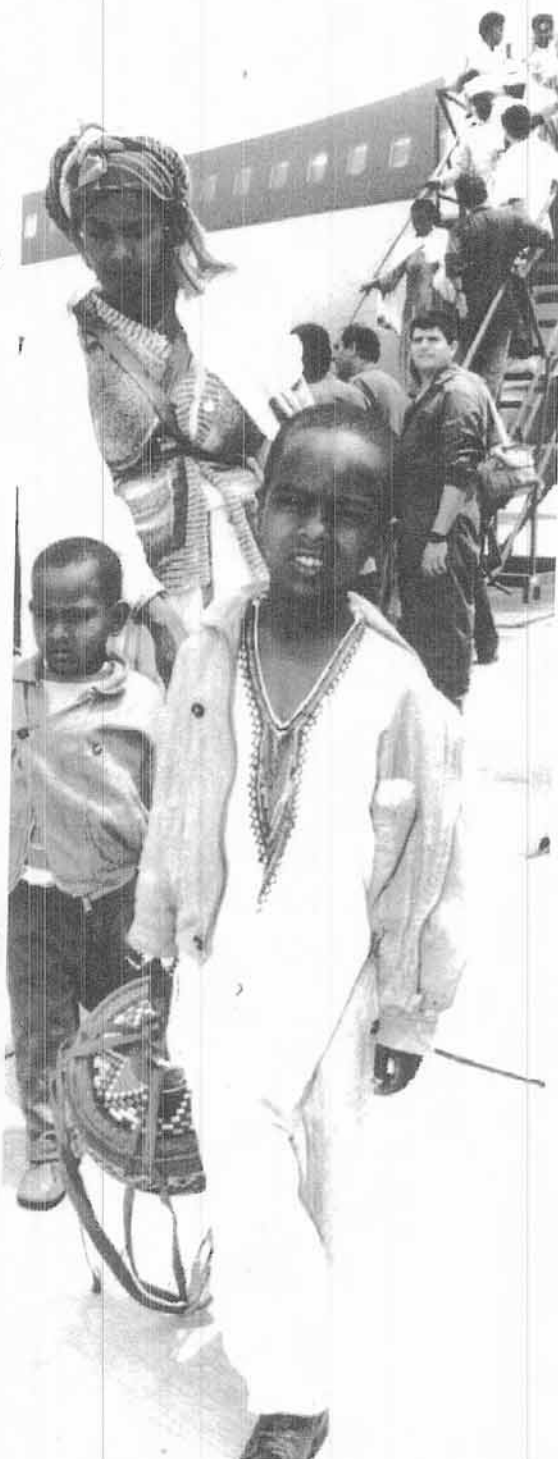
Israel's achievement in absorbing these immigrants is particularly remarkable, considering that the country possesses few natural resources—two-thirds of its land mass is arid desert. Israel has developed agricultural techniques that enabled it to “make the desert bloom.” Moreover, Israel has created world-class universities and has become a global giant in fields such as technology and medical innovation.

### Israel: “A Light Unto the Nations”

For Israel, it is not enough to serve as a safe haven for world Jewry. Equipped with firsthand knowledge of the challenges that resource-poor countries face, Israel has always strived to share its blessings with other less-fortunate countries. Even before establishing embassies in many world capitals, Israel dispatched skilled experts to teach developing nations how to upgrade medical facilities, improve schools and coax crops from arid land.

Less than a century ago, Israel was only a dream in the hearts and minds of millions of Jews. Today, Israel has emerged as a thriving democracy and global leader, committed to fulfilling its biblical mandate of being “a light unto the nations.”

Like the United States, Israel's government and people constantly strive to fulfill the principles embodied in its Declaration of Independence: freedom, justice and peace.



Israel has absorbed immigrants from more than 100 countries during the past six decades, including thousands of Ethiopian Jews.



## WHY ISRAEL MATTERS

### What Congress Did to Support the Establishment of the State of Israel

---

**Supported the Balfour Declaration Endorsing a Jewish Homeland.** In 1922, Congress officially endorsed the creation of Israel when it unanimously passed a joint resolution expressing approval of the British Balfour Declaration. "It is entirely... commendable that the Jewish people in all portions of the world should desire to have a national home...[in] the country which was the cradle of their race," said Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, who introduced the resolution with Rep. Hamilton Fish of New York.

**Called for Jews to Be "Restored" to Their Homeland.** In 1941, 69 senators signed a statement that called for "every possible encouragement to the movement for the restoration of the Jews in Palestine."

**Pressed for an End to Restrictions on Jewish Immigration to Pre-State Palestine.** In 1945, President Harry Truman received a petition signed by 54 senators and 250 representatives that called for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. In the same year, Congress passed a concurrent resolution calling for an end to restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth there.

## A Vibrant Democracy

Israel is a unique sanctuary of democracy, freedom and pluralism in the Middle East, protecting its citizens' rights while upholding the progressive values it shares with America. The Jewish state accomplishes this despite constant military threats and the fact that it is surrounded by authoritarian regimes.

### KEY POINTS

---

- Israel's Declaration of Independence guarantees "complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex."
- Israel guarantees freedom of religion to Jews, Muslims, Christians and members of any other faith, including access to holy sites.
- Israel guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of the press.
- Israel is a country grounded in the rule of law, sustained by a robust judicial system, free and fair elections and full voting rights for all its citizens.
- Unlike any other country in the region, Israel provides full rights to women, who participate in all aspects of social and political life.

## Israel Shares America's Commitment to Democracy

Since President Truman made the historic decision to recognize the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, the U.S.-Israel relationship has been grounded in common values and interests. The people of the United States have seen in Israel a kindred spirit that shares America's fundamental commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and freedoms of speech, press, and religion.



Israel's Knesset (parliament) in Jerusalem is a powerful symbol of Israel's democracy.

This similarity and commitment to democracy have been regularly reflected in polls showing overwhelming support among Americans for a strong U.S.-Israel relationship. To the American people, Israel's devotion to liberty is all the more remarkable in light of the dictatorial regimes of Israel's neighbors, who deny the most basic rights of their own people and, in some cases, support extremist groups trying to violently impose Islamic law on the region.



Israel's Declaration of Independence proclaims many of the same democratic principles that the United States adheres to, including "complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex...(and) freedom

Israel guarantees the right to vote to all diverse citizens, unlike most other countries in the region.

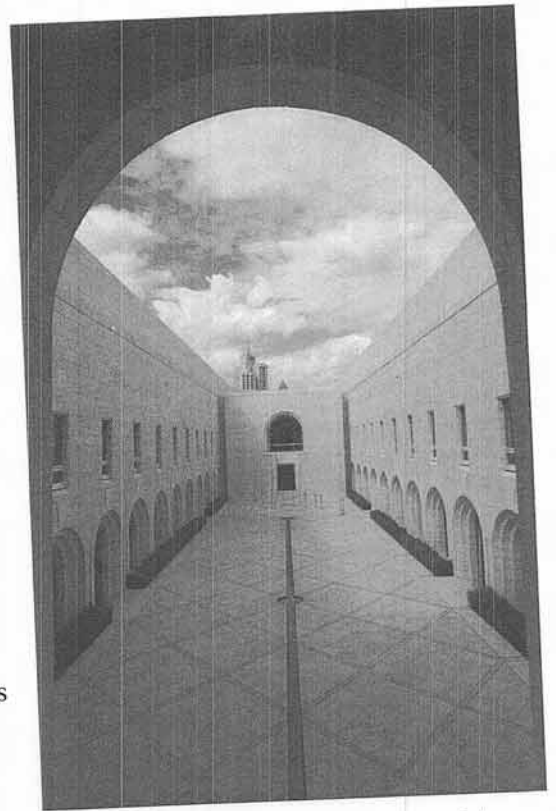
## WHY ISRAEL MATTERS

of religion, conscience, language, education and culture.” Similarly, like the United States and in stark contrast to other Middle East nations, Israel has an independent judicial system, which protects the rights of individuals and operates under the principle of “innocent until proven guilty.” Israel also features regularly scheduled elections that are free and fair and open to all its citizens, regardless of religion, race or sex. The independent group Freedom House has consistently classified Israel as “Free” in its rankings of world nations.

### Israel Has a Vibrant Press and Legal System

Israel has a robust free press with myriad publications representing all views within its society; hundreds of foreign journalists are free to report on every political and diplomatic development. Civil rights are guaranteed by law, and guarded by numerous private organizations and citizen action groups that often openly challenge the government. Israel is considered to be the most advanced and tolerant country in the Middle East on such matters as the guarantee of a fair trial and the protection of minority rights. It is also the leading nation in the region in the protection of gay rights, with strong anti-discrimination laws. Furthermore, it maintains an independent judicial and court system. In Israel, nobody is above the law.

Despite facing enemies that hide bombs in ambulances and dispatch women and children to carry out terrorist attacks, Israel remains committed to following the rule of law. The Israeli Supreme Court has a strong tradition of questioning and often overturning actions of both the Israeli government and its defense forces. For example, the Israeli Supreme Court has outlawed torture and has frequently acted to preserve the rights of Palestinians within the West Bank. Following controversial military operations, Israel conducts independent and thorough inquiries to ensure that appropriate human rights laws were followed.



Israel's Supreme Court serves as a powerful, independent check on the government.

### Israel Respects Freedom of Worship for All Religions

When Israel was established as a safe haven for the Jewish people in the aftermath of the Holocaust, the new state made it a priority to guarantee freedom of religion for all faiths. In Israel's Declaration of Independence explicitly guarantees the rights of religious minorities, and Israel's Knesset has reaffirmed these rights by statute. In most Middle East countries, minority religious groups suffer from persecution and discrimination. In Israel, each faith has its own religious council and courts, recognized by law, with jurisdiction over all religious affairs and matters of personal status.

Since Israel's unification of Jerusalem in 1967, Israel has guaranteed movement among all sections of the city and freedom of access to holy sites for all religions. In fact, Israel has granted each religious community authority over its holy sites in the city, sometimes favoring the status of other faiths over Judaism's claims. In contrast, before 1967, when Jordan controlled Jerusalem, Jews were almost completely barred from visiting holy places such as the Western Wall, and Christians living in Israel were allowed to visit churches and holy sites in eastern Jerusalem only once a year. Today, Jews and Christians are free to visit their holy sites at times of their choosing.



Israel has ensured that the Temple Mount remains accessible to members of all faiths.

## WHY ISRAEL MATTERS

Israel has also allowed Islamic religious authorities administrative control over the Temple Mount and freedom of worship at their holy sites within the area. The Protection of Holy Places Law, enacted by the Knesset in 1967, prescribes penalties for those caught desecrating or impeding access to holy sites associated with any faith. Israel consistently maintains a policy of allowing Christian leaders in Israel, with connections to small Christian communities in Arab countries, to regularly travel to these communities.

Not only do these religious minorities have freedom of worship and access, but their population has grown significantly during the past several decades. Israel is one of the only countries in the Middle East whose Christian population has grown during the past 60 years. Between 1949 and 2012, the Christian population of Israel increased by 351 percent—from 35,000 to 158,000.

Israel has also witnessed a flourishing of its Muslim population. Since 1967, Jerusalem's Muslim population has increased more than four times, from 69,000 to 293,000. As a percentage of Jerusalem's total population, it has increased from one-quarter to more than one-third. Jerusalem's most recent population estimates predict a further increase in the proportion of Arab residents, to 40 percent by 2020. These figures belie any claim that Israel seeks to "Judaize" Jerusalem or drive Arabs from the holy city.

### Women Play a Vital Role in Israeli Society

Unlike any other Middle Eastern nation, women are at the forefront of many aspects of Israeli society. Since 1977, Israel has always had at least one woman on its Supreme Court, and Israel is one of the only countries in the Middle East to elect a woman, Golda Meir, to the position of



Israel is one of the only countries in the Middle East where the Christian population has risen—300 percent—during the past 60 years.

## WHY ISRAEL MATTERS

prime minister. Shelly Yachimovich currently heads the Labor Party and Tzipi Livni headed Kadima and served as foreign minister. Livni is now leading a newly created party, Hatnua (“The Movement”).

Women have played an integral part in the founding and flourishing of the state. Regardless of religion or ethnicity, all women in Israel enjoy equal rights, protections under the law and opportunities to succeed and contribute to society. From the founding of the state, women have long held important academic posts and leadership positions in government and served alongside their male counterparts in Israel’s armed forces.



Golda Meir—one of the first women to serve as prime minister of a country—is an example of the key role women have played in Israeli society.

## WHY ISRAEL MATTERS

Israel's Declaration of Independence guarantees legal and political equality without discrimination based on sex. In 1951, the Knesset passed the Women's Equal Rights Law, and in the 1970s and 1980s, the Knesset enacted additional legislation to bolster anti-discrimination laws.

Whereas many of Israel's neighbors suffer from a high illiteracy rate among women and struggle to balance gender equality and cultural norms, Israel has achieved educational parity for men and women. Israel ranks seventh in the Western world in the percentage of women studying in institutions of higher learning. Women receive 57 percent of all academic degrees, and 46 percent of today's doctoral students are women.

### **Israel Is a Safe Haven for Immigrants From Around the World**

Like the United States, Israel is a country established by immigrants. Since its founding, the tiny state has absorbed millions of immigrants from more than 100 countries, including Jews from the former Soviet Union, Ethiopia and those forced to flee from Arab countries. A haven for Jewish refugees from around the world, Israel has also reached out to assist Jews wherever they suffer from persecution and has made the successful absorption of new immigrants in society a top priority.

Following the War of Independence, Israel struggled economically, with food and other basic commodities rationed, and new immigrants lived in temporary structures. Despite these shortages, Israel took measures to ensure the safety of Jews at risk abroad. Later, to handle the influx of immigrants to Israel, the government created absorption centers to provide housing and Hebrew classes.

Jews from Arab countries were among the first immigrants to be flown into Israel, out of harm's way. One year after independence, the Israeli government arranged to airlift approximately 45,000 Yemenite Jews to Israel in Operation Magic Carpet. In 1951, Israel coordinated with the Iraqi government to allow 130,000 Jews to be transported to Israel. Israel's dedication to helping Jewish communities at risk was also clearly shown when Israel carried out secret missions to rescue Jews in Ethiopia. In 1991, with the help of the United States, Israel flew more than 14,000 Ethiopian Jews to the Jewish state. And with the fall of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, Israel absorbed a massive wave of new immigrants. More than 1 million Jews from the former Soviet Union immigrated to Israel, changing the face of Israeli society.



## WHY ISRAEL MATTERS

### What Congress Has Done to Recognize Israel's Vibrant Democracy

---

**Celebrated Israel's Creation During Key Anniversaries.** Congress has long celebrated Israel's creation and its commitment to the ideals of Western democracy. With overwhelming bipartisan support, the House and the Senate have routinely passed resolutions in honor of Israel's anniversary—including its milestone 50th in 1998 and 60th in 2008—that highlight the two countries' shared values. In 1998, then-Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-GA) and then-House Democratic Leader Richard Gephardt (D-MO) led a bipartisan congressional delegation to Israel to mark Israel's golden anniversary.

**Backed Israel's Inclusion in International Organizations.** Congress has regularly pushed for the fair treatment and inclusion of Israel in a variety of international institutions. During the past decade, members of Congress helped advance Israel's membership in such groups as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and backed the inclusion of Magen David Adom, Israel's emergency medical service, in the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Similarly, Congress has encouraged the United States to help Israel gain membership in the United Nations' Western European and Others (WEOG) regional group, which greatly enhances Israel's right to participate in various U.N. bodies, potentially including the Security Council.

**Visited Israel to Learn About the Issues.** Members of Congress have also routinely traveled to Israel to educate themselves about the key issues facing the region and to express solidarity with their Israeli counterparts. More than half of the House and one-third of the Senate have visited the Jewish state. Senior lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, including Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), have participated in these important trips.

## Israel's Government

Israel's government is the only real democracy in a Middle East dominated by brutal dictatorships.

### KEY POINTS

---

- Israel is the only country in the Middle East with true free elections, a free press, freedom of religion, protection for individuals and minorities, and other safeguards typical of a free society.
- Israel is the only country in the Middle East rated "Free" by Freedom House's report on democracy and human rights in the Middle East.
- Israel's government is a parliamentary democracy consisting of legislative, executive, and judicial branches.
- Israel has an electoral system of proportional representation and the whole country is considered a single constituency.

### Israel's Political Structure

**GOVERNMENT SYSTEM:** Israel's system is based on the principle of separation of powers with checks and balances. The executive branch is subject to the confidence and oversight of the Knesset, Israel's legislature, and judicial review by an independent supreme court.

**THE KNESSET:** Israel's parliament is unicameral, consisting of 120 members who reflect a wide range of parties and points of view. It includes Israelis from all walks of life: Jews, Christian and Muslim Arabs and Druze. It is the house of representatives of the State of Israel.

**ELECTIONS:** The Knesset must be elected at least every four years, but may dissolve itself at any time and call for early elections. Elections to the Knesset are based on a vote for a political party rather than an individual. The vote is universal, countrywide, secret, and proportional. Since the entire country constitutes a single constituency, Knesset seats are assigned in proportion to each party's percentage of total vote. Parties choose their candidates through competitive primaries.

**COALITIONS:** To date, no party in Israel has ever won a majority of 61 Knesset seats on its own. For this reason, all Israeli governments have been based on coalitions and led by one of the bigger parties such as Labor, Likud, or Kadima. The largest party represented in the Knesset selected the Prime Minister of Israel for most of Israel's history. This law was changed to require direct elections of the Prime Minister, which occurred in 1992, 1996, 1999, and 2001. In March 2001, the Knesset voted to change the five-year old law of directly electing the Prime Minister. The 2003 elections reverted back to the earlier method whereby Israelis vote for political parties and not individual candidates. The party receiving the largest plurality is given the opportunity to form a government.

**PRESIDENCY:** Israel's President is head of state, not head of government. As a representative of all the people, his duties are mostly ceremonial and formal, including: accepting envoys; signing treaties and laws; and appointing judges, the Central Bank governor and the State Comptroller.

**LEGAL STRUCTURE:** While Israel has, as yet, no written constitution, several Basic Laws defining powers of state institutions and regulating areas of particular importance for Israeli society have been enacted as the basis for an eventual constitution. The legal system includes a large body of English common law, Ottoman law, elements of Jewish religious law, and statutes which have evolved since independence.

**ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES (IDF):** The IDF, founded in 1948, ranks among the most battle-trained armed forces in the world, having defended the country in five major wars. It is completely subordinate to civilian control. The army functions under a unified command headed by a chief-of-staff that is responsible to the government.

## WHY ISRAEL MATTERS

Comprised of a small standing army of conscripts and career personnel, the IDF's backbone is its much larger reserve force. All eligible men and women are drafted at age 18. Men serve three years, women for two. Men continue to serve in the reserve units for about a month each year until around age 50.

The IDF is commonly regarded as Israel's social equalizer. Men and women serve together in all areas except combat duty. Social services, education, and job training for disadvantaged soldiers, as well as absorption services for new immigrants, are routinely provided through the army.

### Democratic Principles of Israel

**BASIC RIGHTS:** Israel's Declaration of Independence proclaims many of the same democratic principles that the United States adheres to, including "complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race, or sex... (and) freedom of religion conscience, language, education, and culture..."

**INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY:** Similar to the U.S. and in stark contrast to the other Middle East nations, Israel has an independent judicial system which protects the rights of individuals and operates under the principle of "innocent until proven guilty."

**FREE PRESS:** Israel has a robust free press. There are more foreign journalists registered in Jerusalem than in any city in the world other than Washington and Moscow.

**VOTER PARTICIPATION:** Israeli voter turnout averages nearly 80%, among the highest rates in the democratic world.

**CIVIL LIBERTIES:** Guaranteed in law, and guarded by numerous private organizations and citizen's action groups, which openly challenge and criticize the government.

**Freedom of Religion:** The Declaration of the Independence of the State of Israel guarantees freedom of religion to the entire population. Each religious community is free, by law and in practice, to exercise its faith, to administer its own internal affairs, and to visit its holy sites.

**WOMEN'S RIGHTS:** Unlike any other Middle Eastern nation, Israeli women are guaranteed equal rights and equal pay. Women are at the forefront of many aspects of Israeli society. Israel has always had at least one woman on its Supreme Court and Israel is the only country in the Middle East to elect a woman, Golda Meir, as Prime Minister.

**IMMIGRANT SOCIETY:** Israel, a nation of just over seven million people, has taken in three million refugees from more than 80 countries since its establishment.

Senior Government Officials of the 19th Knesset of Israel



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu



President Reuven Rivlin

**MINISTERS**

- Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister, Minister of Communications
- Yitzhak Aharonovitch, Minister of Internal Security
- Uri Yehuda Ariel, Minister of Housing and Construction
- Naftali Bennett, Minister of Religious Services, Minister of Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs  
Minister of the Economy
- Meir Cohen, Minister of Welfare and Social Services
- Gilad Erdan, Minister of Internal Affairs
- Yael German, Minister of Health
- Yisrael Katz, Minister of Transportation and Road Safety
- Uzi Landau, Minister of Tourism
- Sofa Landver, Minister of Immigration and Absorption
- Yair Lapid, Minister of Finance
- Avigdor Liberman, Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Limor Livnat, Minister of Culture and Sport
- Tzipi Livni, Minister of Justice
- Uri Orbach, Minister for Senior Citizens
- Yaakov Perry, Minister of Science, Technology, and Space

## WHY ISRAEL MATTERS

- Shai Piron, Minister of Education
- Silvan Shalom, Minister of National Infrastructure, Energy, and Water, Minister of the Development of the Negev and Galil, Minister of Regional Cooperation
- Yair Shamir, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Yuval Steinitz, Minister of Intelligence , Minister of Strategic Affairs, Minister of International Relations
- Moshe Ya`alon, Minister of Defense

### DEPUTY MINISTERS

- Ofir Akunis, Deputy Minister in the PMO and Liaison Between the Knesset and Government
- Eli Ben-Dahan, Deputy Minister of Religious Services
- Tzachi Hanegbi, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Tzipi Hotovely, Deputy Minister of Transportation and Road Safety
- Fania Kirshenbaum, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs
- Mickey Levy, Deputy Minister of Finance
- Avi Wortzman, Deputy Minister of Education

### CURRENT GOVERNING COALITION

- |                   |            |
|-------------------|------------|
| • Likud           | 18 members |
| • Yesh Atid       | 19 members |
| • Jewish Home     | 12 members |
| • Yisrael Beitenu | 13 members |
| • Hatnua          | 6 members  |
| • TOTAL           | 68         |

## 19th Knesset Members

### LIKUD (18)

1. Ofir Akunis
2. Danny Danon
3. Yuli-Yoel Edelstein
4. Zeev Elkin
5. Gilad Erdan
6. Moshe Zalman Feiglin
7. Gila Gamliel
8. Tzachi Hanegbi
9. Tzipi Hotovely
10. Haim Katz
11. Yisrael Katz
12. Yariv Levin
13. Limor Livnat
14. Benjamin Netanyahu
15. Miri Regev
16. Silvan Shalom
17. Yuval Steinitz
18. Moshe Ya'alon

### YESH ATID (19)

1. Ruth Calderon
2. Meir Cohen
3. Karin Elharrar
4. Rina Frenkel
5. Yael German
6. Ronen Hoffman
7. Yifat Kariv
8. Adi Koll
9. Yair Lapid

10. Aliza Lavie
11. Mickey Levy
12. Dov Lipman
13. Yaakov Perry
14. Shai Piron
15. Yoel Rozbozov
16. Ofer Shelah
17. Shimon Solomon
18. Penina Tamanu-Shata
19. Boaz Toporovsky

### LABOR (15)

1. Hilik Bar
2. Omer Barlev
3. Binyamin (Fouad) Ben-Eliezer
4. Michal Biran
5. Avishay Braverman
6. Eitan Cabel
7. Isaac Herzog
8. Erel Margalit
9. Merav Michaeli
10. Moshe Mizrahi
11. Micky Rosenthal
12. Stav Shafir
13. Nachman Shai
14. Itzik Shmuli
15. Shelly Yachimovich

## WHY ISRAEL MATTERS

### JEWISH HOME (12)

1. Uri Yehuda Ariel
2. Eli Ben-Dahan
3. Naftali Bennett
4. Yoni Chetboun
5. Zvulun Kalfa
6. Shuli Moalem-Refaeli
7. Uri Orbach
8. Ayelet Shaked
9. Nissan Slomiansky
10. Orit Strock
11. Avi Wortzman
12. Mordhay Yogev

### SHAS (11)

1. David Azoulay
2. Yoav Ben-Tzur
3. Amnon Cohen
4. Yitzhak Cohen
5. Aryeh Deri
6. Yakov Margi
7. Avraham Michaeli
8. Meshulam Nahari
9. Yitzhak Vaknin
10. Eliyahu Yishai
11. Nissim Zeev

### YISRAEL BEITENU (13)

1. Yitzhak Aharonovitch
2. Hamad Amar
3. Robert Ilatov
4. Fania Kirshenbaum
5. Uzi Landau
6. Sofa Landver
7. Orly Levi-Abekasis
8. Avigdor Liberman
9. Leon Litinetsky
10. Alex Miller
11. Shimon Ohayon
12. David Rotem
13. Yair Shamir

### HATNUA (6)

1. Tzipi Livni
2. Amram Mitzna
3. Amir Peretz
4. Meir Sheerit
5. Eliezer Stern
6. David Tzur



**MERETZ (6)**

1. Esawi Frij
2. Zahava Gal-On
3. Ilan Gilon
4. Nitzan Horowitz
5. Michal Rozin
6. Tamar Zandberg

**HADASH (4)**

1. Afou Agbaria
2. Mohammad Barakeh
3. Dov Khenin
4. Hanna Swaid

**UNITED ARAB LIST (4)**

1. Talab Abu Arar
2. Massud Ganaim
3. Ibrahim Sarsur
4. Ahmad Tibi

**BALAD (3)**

1. Basel Ghattas
2. Jamal Zahalka
3. Hanin Zoabi

**KADIMA (2)**

1. Israel Hasson
2. Shaul Mofaz

## A Force for Good in the World

By sharing its experience, technologies, and knowledge with others, Israel has improved the lives of millions of people worldwide.

### KEY POINTS

---

- Israeli-developed technologies are used every day around the globe—from cell phone and computer technology to the latest medical procedures.
- Israel has one of the most sophisticated humanitarian assistance programs in the world, reaching the needy in countries near and far to provide critical aid.
- Israel has used its vast disaster response experience to quickly help countries impacted by natural disasters, terrorism, or war.
- Israel is known throughout the world for literally “making the desert bloom.” Israel has shared extensively the agricultural development techniques that it pioneered.
- Israel contributes to a cleaner world, advancing cutting-edge renewable energy and water technologies.

## Israel Provides Humanitarian Assistance Throughout the World

Equipped with firsthand knowledge of the challenges that resource-poor countries face, Israel has strived to provide other countries with the assistance they need to develop and grow.

Before it had even established embassies in many world capitals, Israel sent experts abroad to teach developing nations such skills as how to upgrade medical facilities, improve schools and coax crops from arid land. Today, Israel has one of the most extensive foreign assistance programs in the world for a nation of its size.

Israelis are all too familiar with the reality of genocide. In both the Rwandan and Sudanese genocides, Israel provided humanitarian assistance to the refugees. In Rwanda, Israel established a field hospital and sent several doctors and nurses as well as medical supplies and vaccinations. In Sudan, Israeli humanitarian groups provided water desalination equipment,



Israeli doctors and other experts have quickly responded to major disasters around the globe, including the earthquake in Haiti.

## WHY ISRAEL MATTERS

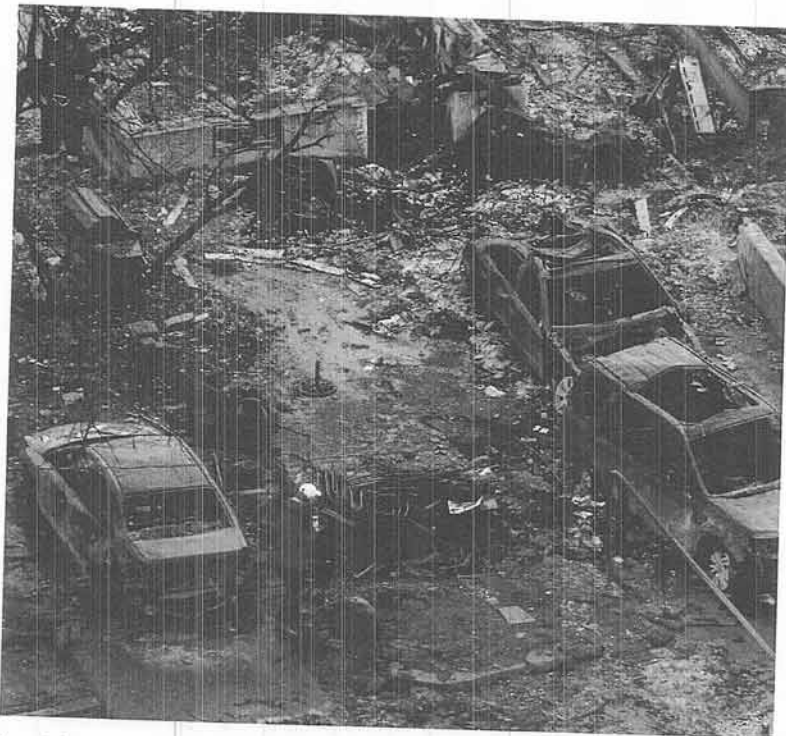
counseling, education, food, and medical supplies. In 2007, Israel dispersed \$5 million to aid Sudanese refugees.

In more than two dozen recent cases, Israel has contributed to relief efforts after earthquakes, floods, hurricanes and other natural disasters. For example, Israel sent medicine, water, food and other supplies to Sri Lanka after the tsunami in 2004. Israel also sent humanitarian aid and equipment to New Orleans and the Eastern Seaboard for victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, respectively. After the 2010 Haiti earthquake, Israel sent a comprehensive hospital team that set the standard for treating victims of a natural disaster in a speedy and humane manner. Israel also sent a medical team and 18 tons of essential supplies in the aftermath of the 2011 Japan earthquake, and a total of 50 mobile structures and 80 housing structures to aid victims of the 2011 Turkey earthquake.

Since 1959, Israel has maintained numerous medical outreach programs, including eye clinics in developing countries. Israel's eye clinics have operated for decades in Nepal, Mauritania, Tonga, Liberia and Micronesia. Local doctors and nurses undergo special training, both at home and in Israel, and the Jewish state has undertaken brief eye-care mission trips to Kazakhstan, Kenya, Maldives, Marshall Islands, and Micronesia.

### **Israeli Technology Advances Key Agricultural Techniques**

Because Israel is 60 percent desert, its farmers and agricultural scientists have long focused on expanding both the yield and quality of crops, as well as making agriculture more efficient overall.



Israel has provided critical aid to the victims of Hurricane Sandy and other natural disasters.

## WHY ISRAEL MATTERS



Israeli agriculture techniques and technology, such as drip irrigation, have helped farmers around the globe, especially in Africa.

Drip irrigation has become popular with fruit and vegetable growers in dry weather areas, from Southern California to the Middle East. The world's first surface drip irrigation system was developed in the 1960s at Kibbutz Hatzerim near Beersheba. Similarly, Israeli scientists have developed genetically modified, disease-resistant bananas, peppers and other crops that are expanding the world's food supply and helping to keep prices down at grocery stores around the globe.

When Israel was founded, it experienced severe difficulties in agriculture production and even instituted a food rationing policy. Now that Israel has "made the desert bloom," the Jewish state is helping others through a series of agriculture programs that include human capacity building, research cooperation, demonstration farms and agribusiness consulting centers. Israel has also established an African Growth Market, which seeks to provide higher yields of crops in arid areas through crop variation and a drip irrigation system. Israeli scientist Dr. Daniel Hillel won the 2012 World Food Prize for his development of an irrigation system called micro-irrigation that allowed for conservation of water and food to be grown in some of the world's most arid climates.

The Binational Agricultural Research & Development Foundation (BARD) connects U.S. and Israeli researchers in the development of agricultural technologies with global significance. Created in 1977, BARD has funded more than 1,100 projects, investing roughly \$400 million in basic and applied science. Breakthroughs in arid land resource management, food safety and environmental protection are but a few of the many developments facilitated through BARD. The Foundation also hosts international workshops to ensure that others are able to benefit from these discoveries.

# How to Avoid a Bad Deal With Iran

The effect of sanctions is diminishing. Tehran isn't bending. And there's only one thing that can get negotiations back on track.

BY AMOS YADLIN , AVNER GOLOV

**T**he negotiations by the United States and five other world powers with Iran over its nuclear program have been extended for up to an additional seven months, and the mantra remains: Avoid a bad deal.

Before the extension, Vice President Joe Biden repeated a vow he and President Barack Obama have made again and again: The United States "will not sign a bad deal." Even skeptics agree. After the extension, Sen. Bob Corker, the ranking Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, opined, "I would rather the administration continue to negotiate than agree to a bad deal." Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu went on CBS's *Face the Nation* to once again warn



251 H Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
[www.aipac.org](http://www.aipac.org)

**Julie Peretz**  
Grassroots and Missions  
Director

Tel (202) 639-5192  
Cell (240) 476-2852  
Fax (202) 347-4921  
[jperetz@aipac.org](mailto:jperetz@aipac.org)

12/4/2014

Knesset votes to dissolve; new elections called for March 17 | The Times of Israel

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL | [www.timesofisrael.com](http://www.timesofisrael.com)

# Knesset votes to dissolve; new elections called for March 17

Eighty-four MKs support measure, which also passes first reading; Livni lashes 'hysterical' Netanyahu; Arab party leaders say they'll unite

BY TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF | December 3, 2014, 10:54 am | Updated: December 3, 2014, 12:54 pm |

**K**nesset members voted overwhelmingly in favor of dissolving the current Knesset in a preliminary vote on Wednesday. Eighty-four MKs supported the measure, none opposed it, and one Knesset member abstained.

A first reading of the bill later Wednesday was also approved, with all 22 Knesset members present voting in favor.

The move will be finalized on Monday with second and third readings.

Knesset faction leaders agreed on March 17, 2015, as the date for new elections, in a meeting with Knesset speaker Yuli Edelstein on Wednesday morning. "We mustn't abuse the public. We cannot take our time," Edelstein said during the meeting. The date must be approved by the

THE AMERICAN ISRAEL PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

**Alex Stone**

Israel Seminars Assistant

T 202.639.5311 • F 202.347.4921 • M 858.395.8097

[astone@aipac.org](mailto:astone@aipac.org)

251 H Street, NW • Washington, DC 20001

