

Beth Davidson

— FOR CONGRESS —

Beth Davidson for Congress: United States — Israel Position Paper

Before I married my husband, Jeff Rothman, I spent two years studying in preparation to convert to Judaism, which I did proudly in 2004. Five years later, I took my family to Israel to connect with our Jewish heritage and visit friends. We walked the streets of Jerusalem, visited the Western Wall, and felt the deep connection to our homeland—a place striving to preserve its identity and safety amidst ongoing threats.

Then, in August 2023, my fifteen-year-old daughter, Josie, traveled across Israel with our Jewish summer camp, Camp Havaya. She stayed in kibbutzim and engaged with Israeli and Palestinian youth, all fiercely believing in the possibility of a future of stability and security for their families. She witnessed firsthand the profound yearning for peace between nations.

My husband and I have raised our children to value their connections to Israel. Over a decade in Hebrew School at our synagogue, Bet Am Shalom, they have learned not just Israel's history but its culture – cooking, dancing, music, and more. That learning has been complemented by summers at Camp Havaya, where our kids learned from and looked up to their Israeli counselors.

How, then, could I explain to my 15-year-old daughter and 12-year-old son that on October 7th, 2023, on the Sabbath and Simchat Torah, Hamas terrorists had crossed the border to massacre over 1,200 innocent people and take hundreds more hostage? As for so many Jewish families in America, the attack touched us personally, razing the very kibbutzim where Josie had stayed just weeks before. Her camp directors organized Zoom meetings to help the teens process their shock and grief. When Josie reached out to her Israeli friends, many responded from bomb shelters. The magnitude of this tragedy was and remains both unfathomable and painfully close to home.

Israel's existence and security are non-negotiable. For me and for my family, championing the sanctity and safety of Israel is not an abstract political stance or foreign policy issue. It is deeply personal—woven into the fabric of our identity and survival as Jews. My husband's great-grandparents left Kiev, Poland and Austria to seek refuge in the United States. For those who couldn't emigrate, Israel would have been their sanctuary. This underscores the indispensable need for a Jewish homeland: a place of safety and belonging in a world that has too often turned against us.

As the Middle East's only democracy, Israel is more than a refuge for the Jewish people; it is a stabilizing force in a turbulent region and a symbol of resilience and hope.

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Supporting Israel is a commitment my family and I uphold through both words and actions. During World War II, one of my husband's grandfathers sold war bonds to support the fight against tyranny, while the other landed on the beaches of Normandy as an army medic. Today, we carry on this legacy by investing in Israel Bonds, directly aiding the Israel Defense Forces. In the wake of the October 7th attacks, I stood in solidarity with hundreds of Rockland County residents at a demonstration in support of Israel outside the county courthouse. Again and again, I have proudly and publicly reaffirmed my unwavering dedication to supporting Israel during one of its darkest chapters.

Israel is not just a strategic ally to the United States but a beacon of democracy and perseverance. My experiences and family history compel me to advocate for policies that strengthen this vital relationship and ensure its future. America's bond with Israel is unbreakable, and I intend to do my part in Congress to maintain our strong support for our ally because it is in America's interests that I do so. One day, I hope my son will also walk through the kibbutzim and visit those same historic sites around the region, understanding the profound significance of Israel as a homeland—a place where our people's history, resilience, and hope converge.

Championing Israel's Security

Israel has an undeniable right to defend itself. Period. Supporting Israel must remain a bipartisan commitment of the United States, and it will always be a deeply personal issue for me and for my family. The United States has a responsibility to ensure that one of our closest allies—and the only democracy in the Middle East—has the resources it needs to protect its citizens from its adversaries, including non-state actors like Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis.

Hamas is an internationally recognized terrorist organization whose primary objective is the destruction of Israel. Hamas does not serve the Palestinian people; rather, it exploits them, using civilians as human shields and intentionally placing them in harm's way. Hamas cannot be part of any legitimate future Palestinian state. Israel has every right to defend itself against this terrorist organization, which has launched more than 10,000 rockets at Israeli cities and continues to hold innocent hostages. At the same time, innocent Palestinian civilians also deserve peace, safety, and the ability to build a future free from the suffering inflicted by Hamas's actions. The U.S. must support humanitarian efforts that provide critical aid to innocent civilians while ensuring that assistance does not end up in the hands of terrorists.

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I strongly support the continuation and growth of the Memorandum of Understanding reached with Israel under the Obama administration, which is set to expire in 2028. The United States currently provides \$3.3 billion in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) funds and \$500 million in missile defense spending annually. I applauded the Biden administration's supplemental military assistance package of \$14.3 billion to bolster Israel's security following the atrocities of October 7th. Programs like Iron Dome, David's Sling, and the upcoming Iron Beam have saved countless innocent lives. The U.S. must continue providing the necessary funding and support to keep these systems fully operational — and keep civilians across the region safe.

Combating the Growing Threat of Iran

Iran remains the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism, and its pursuit of nuclear weapons poses a grave threat to Israel, the Middle East, and global security, including here in the U.S. The United States must take every necessary step to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear capabilities while also countering its funding of terrorist proxies, including Hamas and Hezbollah.

While the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) had serious flaws, the first Trump administration's unilateral withdrawal without a strategic alternative worsened the security situation for both the U.S. and Israel. Iran has grown closer to obtaining a nuclear weapon than ever before. Our government must dedicate every necessary resource and effort to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and never politicize efforts to denuclearize foreign adversaries. Significant efforts must be made to dismantle existing Iranian nuclear infrastructure, including its enrichment of uranium to near-weapons grade. A diplomacy-first approach remains essential, but it must be backed by strict enforcement of economic sanctions as well as the credible threat of military action. Congress must expand sanctions that target Iran's oil exports, financial networks, and military procurement efforts to weaken its ability to finance terrorism. The U.S. must also work with allies to strengthen enforcement mechanisms that prevent Iranian-backed groups from accessing international financial systems.

At the same time, the growing strategic partnership between Russia and Iran poses a dire threat to global stability. The current administration's repeated coziness with Vladimir Putin, including undermining NATO and refusing to hold Russia accountable for its aggression, has only emboldened Iran by strengthening its most powerful ally. Russia has deepened its military and economic cooperation with Iran, including arms transfers and sanctions evasion, which directly threatens U.S. interests and our allies. The U.S. must not only work with Israel and other allies to

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enforce sanctions, bolster intelligence-sharing, and enhance military cooperation but also take a firm stance against Russian support for Iran's destabilizing activities.

Supporting Israel means confronting Iran's threats with clarity and resolve. We cannot afford to waver.

Committing to Peace

The immediate priority must be bringing all hostages home, securing Israel from further attacks, and ensuring humanitarian aid reaches innocent civilians in Gaza. The loss of any innocent life—Israeli or Palestinian—is a tragedy, and the international community must do more to de-escalate violence and provide pathways toward lasting peace. I strongly support the ultimate goal of a negotiated two-state solution that ensures Israel remains a secure, Jewish, and democratic state while providing the Palestinian people with a legitimate path to self-determination.

The silence of too many global actors in the face of Hamas's brutal October 7th attacks, including its targeted violence against women and children, has been appalling. At the same time, the suffering of Palestinian families caught in the crossfire cannot be ignored. We must work toward an end to this conflict that guarantees security for Israel while also providing a future of hope and stability for the Palestinian people. The road to peace has been made longer and far more challenging by the war, but we must remain committed to diplomacy, regional stability, and humanitarian efforts that reduce suffering across the region.

The Abraham Accords demonstrated that peace and cooperation between Israel and its Arab neighbors are possible. These agreements have strengthened security, trade, and cultural exchange between Israel, the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco. Strengthening and expanding the Abraham Accords is in the economic and security interest of the entire region. This model of diplomacy should serve as a blueprint for future negotiations—including a framework for direct talks between Israel and Palestinian leadership when conditions allow.

Opposing BDS

The BDS movement unfairly targets Israel, the world's only Jewish state, while doing nothing to promote peace or improve the lives of Palestinians. Its goal is not coexistence but economic and

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diplomatic isolation, which undermines legitimate negotiations. BDS also harms U.S. interests and runs counter to our commitment to a strong U.S.-Israel relationship. I will always stand against BDS and any movement that seeks to delegitimize Israel's right to exist.

Combating Antisemitism and Protecting the Safety of Jews Everywhere

New York is home to the second-largest Jewish population in the world, after Israel. Standing with our Jewish homeland must go hand in hand with protecting Jewish communities here at home: in our districts, across our states, and throughout the country.

Since October 7th, antisemitism in the United States has surged in deeply alarming ways. American Jews have faced a sharp rise in threats, harassment, and discrimination. Synagogues have been fire-bombed. People have been attacked merely for existing as Jews. My own children have not been immune—they've experienced antisemitic bullying in school. On college campuses, fear has taken root among Jewish students. That is unacceptable.

I strongly oppose the current administration's dismantling of civil rights offices at the Department of Education. These offices are critical for investigating and addressing antisemitism on college campuses. Similarly, the administration's efforts to gut the Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice, and its removal of resources from the FBI and DHS, have undermined our government's ability to track, investigate, and prosecute antisemitic hate crimes.

I was appalled when Congress passed a Continuing Resolution that eliminated vital security funding for synagogues at a time when Jewish religious and community centers face unprecedented threats. We should be increasing resources to combat antisemitism, not weakening the very institutions designed to keep our communities safe.

I am committed to expanding Holocaust education, strengthening federal civil rights protections for Jewish Americans, and ensuring law enforcement has the tools it needs to prevent and prosecute antisemitic violence. I support the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism and will work to make sure both the Department of Justice and the Department of Education are equipped to protect Jewish communities from harm and discrimination.

Jewish Americans should never feel afraid to walk in their neighborhoods, attend services, or express their identity. As your Congresswoman, I will be a relentless, faithful advocate for the Jewish community—ensuring our voices are heard, our rights upheld, and our safety protected.