JCPA RESOLUTION ON 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1967 WAR

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Summary: This coming year marks the 50th anniversary of the historic 1967 Six Day War (1967 War), which resulted in the reunification of Jerusalem. It is an opportunity for the organized Jewish community to commemorate the event, to educate the younger generation about it and to reaffirm strong support for peace between Israel and her Arab neighbors. Israel’s detractors can be expected to take advantage of the anniversary to blame Israel for fifty years of occupation in the West Bank and Gaza, and to intensify calls to delegitimize and take action against the Jewish state. A resolution is needed to frame these issues and to provide programmatic guidance to the field.

The 1967 War was a transformative event in the history of Israel and the Jewish people. Surrounded on all its borders and threatened with annihilation, Israel emerged after six days with a decisive military victory against the combined armies of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon. The city of Jerusalem was reunified after 19 years of imposed division with no access to Jewish holy sites. Since 1967, Israel has respected the right of all peoples to visit their holy sites, subject to security requirements.

However, the 1967 War also created unresolved challenges with which Israel grapples to this day. It left Israel in control over the lives of millions of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza. This situation, which has lasted half a century, has caused enormous trauma and suffering on both sides. Both before the 1967 War and thereafter, Israel has consistently struggled to achieve peace with its neighbors, making painful sacrifices, including the dismantling of settlements in strategically important areas. A peace treaty with Egypt was forged in 1979, and Israel withdrew from the Sinai. Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty in 1994, which has led to vital security cooperation in the face of threats to both nations.

In the pursuit of peace and reconciliation, Israel engaged in direct negotiations with Palestinian leadership since 1993, forged interim agreements,
and, despite tensions, terrorism and other difficulties, has developed a working administrative and security relationship with the Palestinian Authority. Israel unilaterally disengaged from Gaza in 2005, with the aim of improving the situation for Palestinians on the ground.

While there is responsibility on all sides of the absence of peace, the core of the problem remains: the Palestinian refusal to accept a Jewish state; Palestinian celebration of terrorists who kill Israelis; Palestinian denial of the 3,000 year connection of the Jewish people to the land of Israel and Palestinian avoidance of direct negotiations, going instead to international bodies for recognition and delegitimization of Israel.

Despite numerous efforts over the years, a peace agreement between Israel and Palestinian leadership has proven to be elusive.

**The Jewish Council for Public Affairs believes that:**

- The 50th anniversary of Israel’s military victory in the 1967 War is an occasion to be commemorated by the organized American Jewish community.

- This anniversary provides an opportunity to educate the younger generation of Jews and leaders in the broader community about events that have shaped the Middle East to this day.

- Regardless of the outcome of future negotiations regarding the status of Jerusalem, the city should remain undivided with access to all religious sites protected, as has been the case since its reunification.

- It is important to reaffirm strong support for the two-state vision of a democratic Jewish State of Israel existing side-by-side in peace and security with an independent State of Palestine. This formulation has been
endorsed by the international community and is the only viable resolution to this conflict, which predates the 1967 war by many decades.

- While the current environment does not appear conducive to peace initiatives, Palestinian leadership should accept Israel’s call to resume unconditional negotiations leading to a comprehensive conflict-ending agreement resolving all outstanding issues, including borders, refugees, security, settlements and Jerusalem. As always, U.S. assistance in facilitating these negotiations will be vital.

- There is much value in expanding efforts by Israeli and Palestinian civil society leaders to build an infrastructure of peace from the ground up through people-to-people initiatives. Such efforts may provide impetus to pursue diplomatic solutions, and will serve to anchor any future agreements.

- Beyond the Palestinian issue, a wider peace between Israel and the Arab world would significantly bolster efforts to confront extremism and violence in the region fomented by Iran, ISIL and others.

- Attempts by Israel’s detractors to use the 50th anniversary to brand Israel as a permanent occupier, increase Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions efforts, and promote a “one state narrative” are morally and factually wrong and place obstacles in the path to peace and reconciliation.

**The Jewish community relations field should:**

- Share background materials and sponsor forums in the Jewish and general communities that provide accurate information surrounding the period leading up to, during and after the 1967 War.
• Focus special attention on educating students and other young professionals about the 1967 War. Partnerships with Hillel and others with outreach to these constituencies are most effective.

• Advocate the policy positions above to the incoming administration, members of Congress and other decision-makers and opinion-molders.

• Consider encouraging adoption of local and/or state government proclamations consistent with the policy positions above, if political conditions are conducive.

• Support initiatives that offer concrete opportunities to support the two states for two peoples vision, such as San Francisco’s Invest in Peace www.investinpeace.org and Israeli-Palestinian people-to-people programs promoted by the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP).

• Prepare a 50th anniversary media outreach plan, including publication of op-ed pieces, encouraging positive editorials, and making experts and people who participated in the 1967 War available for interviews.

• Sponsor cultural events that underscore the hope for peace in the Middle East.

• Be alert to activities of Israel’s detractors seeking to use the 50th anniversary to advance their agenda and develop appropriate responses.