



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Jewish New York Elected Officials: Statement On Israel/Gaza And The Hostage Release And Ceasefire Deal

LIZ KRUEGER November 22, 2023

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New York City -- Senator Liz Krueger joined several of her colleagues in releasing the following statement regarding the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas:

As progressive New York Jewish elected leaders, we care deeply about Israel, and are strongly committed to its Jewish and democratic future, grounded in the resilience of its people, and

consistent with the vision of its Declaration of Independence: “based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel,” that “will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex.”

We have also long believed that a Jewish and democratic future for Israel requires an end to the Occupation and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, alongside a secure Israel, where all the people on the land are safe and free.

We were horrified and continue to grieve Hamas’ unconscionable, murderous terrorist attacks of October 7, killing 1,200 people in one day. We continue to demand that the hostages be returned to their loved ones immediately. Hamas, a terror group which was last elected to govern Gaza in 2006 cannot be reasoned with. Given that Hamas broke a ceasefire agreement on October 7th, we understand that it’s difficult for Israelis to trust that they wouldn’t do that again, with dire consequences.

Hamas cannot be allowed to continue to govern Gaza. Its founding charter pledges the destruction of Israel, and its leaders have continued to reaffirm their commitment to endless terror attacks. Israel has the need and the right under international law to defend itself, to seek to rescue the hostages, and to eliminate Hamas’ terror infrastructure in order to keep its citizens safe.

However, we are also deeply distressed by the approach being taken by the Netanyahu government. Widespread bombing has killed many thousands of Palestinians, the overwhelming majority of them civilians and nearly half of them children. The siege, and the shutoff of food, water, electricity, and medical supplies have created a disastrous humanitarian emergency.

We want to support the Israeli government's approach, but doing so is made far more difficult when government officials speak of bombing where "the emphasis is on damage and not on accuracy," of displacement of Palestinians, and of nuclear weapons. We feel a very strong tension between how the Netanyahu government is conducting the war and the Jewish value of b'tzelem Elohim, that every human being is created in the image of God.

We therefore welcome the news of a four-day cessation of hostilities, and a hostage release deal. We're relieved to hear that this deal includes provisions for the Red Cross to visit and care for those hostages who will not be released. Critically, any deal must also allow urgent humanitarian aid to flow, the injured to leave, further negotiations and hostage release to take place, and civilian protection measures to be put in place to curb unacceptable levels of civilian death and suffering.

Any further multi-day cessation, urged by President Biden, Secretary Blinken, the UN Security Council, and many others, should be accompanied by the release of all the hostages. Their release could change the trajectory of the conflict, and begin to offer a path forward, toward an interim authority taking governance of Gaza, longer-term humanitarian assistance, and Palestinians returning to their homes there.

The Netanyahu government's demonstrated approach is also inconsistent with a vision of peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians, of self-determination for both peoples, and therefore of any sustainable democratic future for Israel. There is no credible plan for governing Gaza after the war. Deadly settler violence and displacement is allowed to rampage in the West Bank, rapidly exacerbated by the war, causing even more suffering and threatening to expand the conflict.

Ultimately, there is no military solution to the conflict. There will need to be negotiation and political compromise, between Israelis and Palestinians, with the international community

involved and a strong role for the U.S., to achieve safety, stability, and co-existence via a two-state solution, with self-determination for both peoples. We must keep that vision alive, even when it seems so far away.

As city and state elected officials, our legislative work is not on this war. However, we know our constituents here are deeply connected to Israel and Palestine, and the conflict there reverberates overseas to our city. Closer to home, we are also anguished by the ways these violent weeks have resulted in surging antisemitism and Islamophobia, and in rising tensions between communities, including increasing reports we hear from Jewish, Arab, and Muslim constituents who are scared of being physically harmed while going about their daily lives. There is no excuse whatsoever for hate crimes, violence, or vandalism. Violence begets violence, and our communities here will also be safer when those in Israel and Palestine are safer. And while all speech is free, not all of it is good; we must remain deeply committed to rooting out antisemitism and Islamophobia.

We pledge our continued efforts to work vigilantly against hate and to keep all our communities safe, and we plead with the leaders in government, education, and around the city — and with everyone who reads this message — to do the same.

Signatories

Assemblymember Harvey Epstein

State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal

State Senator Liz Krueger

NYC Comptroller Brad Lander

Councilmember Lincoln Restler

Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal