

Human Rights Must Be Universal

Leaders from Around the World Endorse American Jewish Committee Statement on the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

In the dark shadow of the Holocaust and the devastation of World War II, on December 10, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted, without opposition, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document that recognized “the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family,” and in which states pledged “to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance.” The Declaration’s affirmation of the universality of human rights inspired hope among people everywhere and empowered them to demand their full realization.

As we mark the 75th anniversary of this eloquent defense of human worth and dignity – a document that has informed the creation of multilateral and national human rights monitoring mechanisms, human rights organizations and academic disciplines, and a global human rights agenda – we must also acknowledge how widely and routinely it has been ignored by international governmental and non-governmental agencies when it concerns Israel and Jews.

The international community rightly raised its voice against Syria’s slaughter of its citizens, the Iranian regime’s systematic brutality against women, minorities, and dissenters, and Russia’s atrocious abuses in Ukraine and at home. So, too, does the principle of universality demand condemnation of the brutal Hamas attacks of October 7, in which its terrorists murdered, kidnapped, raped, mutilated, and burned alive Israeli women, men, children, and babies.

On this anniversary of the Declaration, we, the undersigned, pledge to insist on its universality – a universality that calls for the unconditional return of all the hostages, denounces the horrific human rights violations committed by Hamas, and confronts acts of violence and escalating threats toward Jews worldwide.

Universal must mean universal.

Alireza Akhondi
Member of Parliament of Sweden, 2018-Present

Masih Alinejad
Iranian Journalist, Author, Women’s Rights Campaigner

Andrus Ansip
Prime Minister of Estonia, 2005-2014; Vice-President of the European Commission, 2014-2019

Uzi Arad
National Security Advisor of Israel, 2009-2011

Lt. Gen. (res.) Gabi Ashkenazi
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel, 2005-2021; Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces, 2007-2011

Ehud Barak
Prime Minister of Israel, 1999-2001

Mark Begich
U.S. Senate, 2009-2015

Xavier Bertrand
President of the Regional Council of Hauts de France, 2015-Present; Minister of Labor, Employment and Health of France, 2010-2012

Jeb Bush
Governor of Florida, 1999-2007

Cheri Bustos
U.S. House of Representatives, 2013-2023; Co-chair, Former Members of Congress for Israel

Elan S. Carr
CEO, Israeli-American Council (IAC); U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, 2019-2021

Imam Hassen Chalghoumi
President of the Conference of Imams of France

Norm Coleman
U.S. Senate, 2003-2009; Mayor of St. Paul, Minnesota, 1994-2002

Charlie Crist
U.S. House of Representatives, 2017-2022; Governor of Florida, 2007-2011

Jim Davis
U.S. House of Representatives, 1997-2007

Maj. Gen. (res.) Uzi Dayan
Deputy Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces, 1998-2000; National Security Advisor 2000-2002

Ivan Duque Márquez
President of Colombia, 2018-2022

Maj. Gen. (ret.) Giora Eiland
Head of the Israeli National Security Council, 2004-2006

Stuart E. Eizenstat
U.S. Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, 1999-2001; U.S. Ambassador to the European Union, 1993-1996

Piero Fassino
Minister of Justice of Italy, 2000-2001; Minister of Foreign Trade, 1998-2000

Eliécer Feinzaig Mintz
Member of Congress of Costa Rica, 2022-Present

Eric D. Fingerhut
President and CEO, Jewish Federations of North America; U.S. House of Representatives, 1993-1995

Jan Fischer
Prime Minister of Czech Republic, 2009-2010

Edmund Fitton-Brown
Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Yemen, 2015-2017; Monitoring Team Coordinator, United Nations, 2018-2022

Ira Forman
U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, 2013-2017

Anna Fotyga
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, 2006-2007; Member of European Parliament, 2014-Present

Jason Greenblatt
White House Middle East Envoy, 2017-2019

Claudio Grossman
Member of the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, 1993-2001; Member of the UN Committee Against Torture, 2003-2015

Efraim Halevy
Head of the Israeli National Security Council, 2002-2003; Director of Mossad, 1998-2002

David Harris
Vice Chair of ISGAP; CEO of American Jewish Committee (AJC), 1990-2022

Brian Hook
U.S. Special Representative for Iran, 2018-2020; Director of Policy Planning, U.S. Department of State, 2017-2018

John Howard
Prime Minister of Australia, 1996-2007

Dr. Eyal Hulata
National Security Advisor and Head of the Israeli National Security Council, 2021-2023

Prof. Dr. h.c. Wolfgang Ischinger
Chair, Munich Security Conference; 2008-2022; Ambassador of Germany to the U.S., 2001-2006

Steve Israel
U.S. House of Representatives, 2001-2016; Co-chair, Former Members of Congress for Israel

Maj. Gen. (ret.) David Ivry
Head of the Israeli National Security Council, 1999-2000; Ambassador of Israel to the U.S., 2000-2002

Rasa Juknevičienė
Minister of Defense of Lithuania, 2008-2012; Member of the European Parliament, 2019-Present

Garry Kasparov
World Chess Champion; Chairman of the Renew Democracy Initiative

Ron Klein
U.S. House of Representatives, 2007 - 2011

Bronisław Komorowski
President of Poland, 2010-2015

Aleksander Kwasniewski
President of Poland, 1995-2005

Celso Lafer
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brazil, 2001-2002 and 1992

Mary Landrieu
U.S. Senate, 1997-2015

Bernard-Henri Lévy
Philosopher, Filmmaker, Author

Joe Lieberman
U.S. Senate, 1989-2013

Tzipi Livni
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel and Vice Prime Minister, 2006-2009

Douglas Lute
Ambassador of the U.S. to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 2013-2017

Jane Lute
U.S. Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security, 2009-2013

Daniel Mitov
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, 2014-2017; Member of Parliament of Bulgaria, 2021-Present

Diego Molano Aponte
Minister of Defense of Colombia, 2020-2022

Ehud Olmert
Prime Minister of Israel, 2006-2009

Dr. Solomon Passy
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, 2001-2005; Founding President, Atlantic Club of Bulgaria

Ed Perlmutter
U.S. House of Representatives, 2007-2023

Rosen Plevneliev
President of Bulgaria, 2012-2017

José Manuel Restrepo Abondano
Minister of Economy of Colombia, 2021-2022

Miguel Ángel Rodríguez
President of Costa Rica, 1998-2002

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
U.S. House of Representatives, 1989-2019; Co-chair, Former Members of Congress for Israel

Norman T. Roule
Non-Resident Senior Adviser with the Transnational Threats Project, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

Nathan Sales
U.S. State Department Ambassador at Large and Coordinator for Counterterrorism, 2017-2021

Anders Samuelsen
Foreign Minister of Denmark, 2016-2019

Radek Sikorski
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, 2007-2014; Member of the European Parliament, 2019-Present

Davor Ivo Stier
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Croatia, 2016-2017; Member of European Parliament, 2013-2016

Giulio Terzi di Sant’Agata
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy, 2011-2013; Ambassador to the U.S., 2009-2011

Matej Tonin
Minister of Defense of Slovenia, 2020-2022

Frances F. Townsend
Assistant to the U.S. President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, 2004-2008

Marian Turzki
Chairman of the International Auschwitz Committee

Manuel Valls
Prime Minister of France, 2014-2016

Alexandr Vondra
Minister of Defense of Czech Republic, 2010-2012; Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2006-2007; Member of the European Parliament, 2019-Present

Mark Wallace
U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, 2006-2009

Christian Wulff
President of Germany, 2010-2012

Moshe Ya’alon
Minister of Defense of Israel, 2013-2016; Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces, 2002-2005

Ekaterina Zaharieva
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, 2017-2021; Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee, National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2021-Present

Lee Zeldin
U.S. House of Representatives, 2015-2023; Co-chair, Former Members of Congress for Israel

Francois Zimeray
Ambassador for Human Rights of France, 2008-2013; Ambassador to Denmark, 2013-2018

Juan Ignacio Zoido
Minister of Interior of Spain, 2016-2018