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 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 dissidents, 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 AbdoHni
Member of Parliament of Sweden, 2013-2014

Maith Almejd
Iranian Journalist, Author, Women’s Rights Campaigner

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

Ambassador
National Security Advisor of Israel, 2016-2018

Us. Gen. (ret.) Gail Ashkenazi
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel, 2020-2021; Chief of Staff of the Israeli 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 Social Affairs, France, 2010-2012

Jeb Bush
Governor of Florida, 1999-2007

Charles Christ
U.S. House of Representatives, 2013-2023; Co-Chair, Former Member of Congress, Hawaii

Elan S. Carr
CEO, American Israel Council (AIC); U.S. Special Envoy for International Religious Freedom

Jim Davis
Ambassador to the European Union, 1993-1996

Piero Fassino
Minister of Justice of Italy, 2005-2009; Minister of Foreign Trade, 1998-2000

Eliezer Feinzig Mintz
Minister of Agriculture of Costa Rica, 2022-Present

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

Jen Finer
Prime Minister of Czech Republic, 2009-2010

Edmund Finton-Brown
Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the U.S., 2015-2017; Monitoring Team Coordinator, United Nations, 2018-2022

Ira Forman
U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism

Jasmin Oubrahim
White House Middle East Envoy, 2017-2019

Claire Grossman
Member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 1993-2001; Member of the UN Commission on Human Rights Against Torture, 2003-2015

Efram 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

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

Anders Samuelsen
Member of Parliament of Denmark, 2016-2019

Radz 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, 2013-2015; Ambassador to the U.S., 2009-2011

Matej Tonin
Minister of Defense of Slovenia, 2020-2022

Francois Townsend
Assistant to the U.S. President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, 2005-2008

Marian Turski
Chairman of the International Auschwitz Committee

Manuel Valls
Prime Minister of Spain, 2014-2016

Alexandr Vondra
Minister of Defense of Czech Republic, 2010-2012; Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2007-2014; Member of the European Parliament, 2019-Present

Mark Wallace

Christian Wulf
President of Germany, 2010-2012

Moshe Ya’alon
Minister of Defense of Israel, 2015-2016; Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces, 2002-2005

Ekaterina Zahraveva
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 Defense Forces

Adam Zoelke
Ambassador for Human Rights of the United States, 2020-2021; Chair, Former Members of Congress for Israel Defense Forces

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