

**Statement of Jacob J. Lew**  
**Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the State of Israel**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**October 18, 2023**

Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Risch, Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear as the President's nominee to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the State of Israel, and grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their trust and confidence at this critical moment. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you and other Members of Congress to advance U.S. and Israeli interests.

Joining me today are my wife Ruth and our children. They supported this mission when the immediate focus was to expand the Abraham Accords by further integrating Israel into the Middle East region, and they remain supportive as Israel is in the midst of conflict, with the dream of working toward more peaceful days. As always, knowing they are behind me is at the core of my ability to serve.

I cannot remember a time when Israel's struggle for security was not at the forefront of my mind. I came of age in a family that combined belief in religious Zionism and labor Zionism. When I was 12, the age of my oldest grandchild today, we followed daily reports of the Six-Day War with as close to real-time information as four daily papers and broadcast news would provide. In 1973, the year I came to Washington as a young man, I learned of the Yom Kippur War at synagogue on our most solemn day of prayer, and I worried deeply about the survival of the State of Israel. The horrific and murderous terrorist attacks just days ago shattered another holy day, and learning again of an attack on Israel while at a prayer service was an experience I had hoped never to repeat.

At this moment, there is no greater mission than to be asked to strengthen the ties between the United States and the State of Israel and to work toward peace in a region that has known so much war and destruction.

This savage attack demands the condemnation of the world, and President Biden has made clear that the United States stands with Israel in its efforts to defend itself.

I will do my utmost to end the horrific attacks by Hamas and ensure Israel has what it needs to defend itself. And I will spare no effort in working to help American citizens now captive to return home safely. And I will work to root out payments to terrorists and their families as rewards for their heinous crimes.

If confirmed, I will work to prevent other state or non-state actors from expanding this conflict to new fronts. And I will coordinate with the international community to address the humanitarian crisis facing innocent civilians in Gaza who are being used as human shields by Hamas.

And Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, I want to be clear: Iran is a threat to regional stability and to Israel's existence. If confirmed, I will uphold President Biden's warning to anyone in the region who might try to take advantage of the current crisis: Don't.

I will work to strengthen Israel's security. Israel is our closest partner in the region, and its security is paramount. The President has been clear, the U.S. commitment to Israel is ironclad, demonstrated, in part, by our 38-billion-dollar Memorandum of Understanding covering FY2019- FY2028.

In the midst of war, our long-term strategic objectives must also remain clear. If confirmed, I will work to advance comprehensive and lasting peace through a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and, more broadly, to build upon the Abraham Accords and promote more integration, normalization, and cooperation across the region, with Israel as a fully recognized partner.

I look forward to deepening economic and commercial relationships, enhancing cooperation and economic security in sectors such as

cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, transportation, smart agricultural technologies, and clean energy.

And as Israel's economy grows and diversifies, the US and Israel must enhance our close cooperation on foreign investment risk management.

If confirmed, I will continue to oppose all efforts to isolate and delegitimize Israel internationally and support the global fight against antisemitism. I will advance the tireless work of this Administration to firmly reject the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement, while respecting the rights of all Americans to free speech. I will work to reinforce collective efforts to combat antisemitism— building on President Biden's National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism - including the abhorrent incidents in the wake of the Hamas attacks on October 7.

More broadly, if confirmed, I will work to further strengthen our 75-year-old partnership with Israel and deepen the bonds between our people.

Finally, as someone who has dedicated much of my life to public service, I want to thank the talented and committed foreign service officers, civil servants and foreign nationals who are doing an extraordinary job at a time of violence and war to represent the United States in Washington and abroad. Their dedication and courage deserve our admiration and appreciation.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Risch, thank you for the opportunity to testify and I look forward to your questions.