

*"...We extend our hand to all neighboring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighborliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East..."*

**The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel**

**May 14, 1948**

## **57 Years of Independence Later, the Dream Remains Strong**

For David Ben-Gurion and the other brave Zionists who founded the State of Israel, peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors was such a fundamental goal that it was enshrined in the country's declaration of independence.

Despite numerous wars and other conflicts, successive Israeli leaders—including those who did not necessarily assume power with the goal of pursuing peace—have recognized that Israel's long-term security, political, and economic interests depend on finding diplomatic solutions to the differences it has with other nations.

In 1978, the Israeli Peace Now movement started building grassroots support in Israel for the goal of realizing the Israeli founders' dream of peace. And Americans for Peace Now began working in the United States to help Peace Now and its efforts a few years later.

Together, we have backed Prime Minister Menachem Begin's peace treaty with Egypt and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's peace accord with Jordan, as well as his pursuit of peace with the Palestinians. These agreements have helped bring Israel prosperity, an end to its diplomatic isolation, and more secure borders.

In this same spirit, we are supporting Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's initiative to evacuate settlers and troops from Gaza and the northern West Bank. Prime Minister Sharon has come to recognize that Israel's future as a Jewish, democratic state cannot be ensured if its occupation of Palestinian lands continues unabated. His efforts to disengage Israel from some parts of the occupied territories are an important precedent for the removal of other settlements in years ahead and a welcomed step towards the resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Israel has not completely achieved the peaceful relations with all its neighbors that the founders of the state envisioned. But it's made significant progress in 57 years—and it now has an opportunity "to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East."

Please join Peace Now and Americans for Peace Now in wishing Israel a happy Independence Day and in working to strengthen the Jewish state through peace.

## **Americans for Peace Now**

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