

# The Majority Has Decided: It's Time to Leave Gaza



On October 26th, the Israeli Knesset-by a vote of 67 to 45-gave its approval to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to remove settlers and troops from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank. Although more legislative and cabinet steps must be taken before this plan is implemented, this Knesset vote was an historic step toward lifting a huge burden that Israel placed upon its own shoulders over 35 years ago.

The majority of Israelis-and now their representatives-recognize that settlements are a tremendous security, economic, and diplomatic liability for the country. Approval of this disengagement plan sets an important precedent for the evacuation of other settlements in the years ahead.

Americans for Peace Now is proud that our Israeli sister organization, Shalom Achshav, played a key role in organizing a massive demonstration of support for disengagement in Jerusalem just prior to the Knesset vote. Shalom Achshav will continue to work through the Majority Coalition-which includes the Labor Party, the Yahad Party, the Kibbutz movement, and youth movements-to make sure that disengagement becomes a reality.

Now that the will of the Israeli majority has been expressed in the Knesset, APN calls upon the settlers and their supporters to accept this democratically derived decision.

We call upon Prime Minister Sharon to be steadfast in carrying out the removal of settlements from all of Gaza and parts of the West Bank, ideally in coordination with Palestinian leaders, as well as to fulfill Israel's commitments regarding outposts and settlement construction.

We call upon Palestinian leaders to capitalize on the opportunity that disengagement offers them by demonstrating good governance in Gaza and fighting terrorism there to ensure a secure Israeli evacuation.

And we call upon the U.S. and the international community to help guarantee that this plan becomes part of a larger peace process that will entail the removal of more settlements and the resumption of peace negotiations.

## Americans for Peace Now

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