



BRIDGEWAY PARTNERS
Building Bridges for Social Change

A Third Way

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Whose Side Are You On?

As we watch the horror continuing to unfold with misery upon misery for Israelis and Palestinians, we feel we must stake a claim by naming our allegiances. It seems that we have to take a side— for or against the Palestinians, for or against the Israelis. We need to name the perpetrators.

If you could bear to even catch a glimpse of the slain Israelis near the Gaza border, the utterly sickening grisly murders that Hamas gleefully displayed on social media to admiring worldwide audiences and celebrations, it's obvious who the evil ones are. There is nothing to discuss. The solution is the elimination of Hamas and the repression of Palestinian goals for sovereignty.

Or, if you see the images of destruction wrought by the relentless bombing, the shut offs of electricity and water in Gaza, the unprovoked killings of unarmed Palestinians in the West Bank, and the destruction of thousands of ancient olive trees you also can confidently identify the evil force. You know whose side you are on. The solution is the elimination of Israel.

Recently, posters went up around Jerusalem stating in Hebrew, “Revenge does not lead to security”. No number of inhumane acts can eradicate the other. Hamas, as many say, cannot be eradicated by acts of revenge. Hamas is an ideology as much as it is a group of terrorists. Recent reports reveal that Netanyahu bolstered support for Hamas in order to undermine the more moderate Palestinian Authority and make sure there was no partner for peace.

In September and early October, a survey of Palestinian political attitudes was conducted by Dr. Amaney Jamal of the Princeton Institute for International Studies. In the days right before October 7th, she found that far less than one third of Gazan Palestinians – 28% - supported Hamas. In addition, she found that the primary concern was political corruption, with concern about Israeli behavior a close second. It's also good to know that Israel was moving towards peace with major Arab countries.

At the same time, hundreds of thousands of Israelis were demonstrating weekly to protect its democracy from its own corrupt leadership.

We feel we must make a choice. Are we with Israel? Then stand with Israel, and don't protest the lies and corruption of its extreme right-wing government. Or, if we are against Israel and pro-

Palestinian, then label the Israelis as occupiers or colonists who are committing genocide, but don't mention the corruption of Hamas and the demonic practice of using innocents as human shields.

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There *is* a possibility of respecting the aspirations of each people to have sovereignty and to accept the others' legitimacy. To make this third choice is to look for the leaders who validate both peoples and to support those leaders on each side who can actually find a path to coexistence. It's not easy to find such leaders, but they do exist. And they need our support.

I'm looking for a place to stand. This a complicated and merciless situation that I cannot change. I have no control over the situation and I am experiencing grief, fear and rage. But I can educate myself, and I can talk to people, and I can try to find a way forward that includes thinking carefully about whom I support, whom I send money to, what I say to people, and how I participate in controversial conversations.

Stop saying there is no path to peace. Despite decades of aggression and mistrust, many people in the region still honor each others' essential humanity and collaborate around joint projects of shared interest. [Two recent studies](#) find that:

- Jewish Israelis and Palestinians inside and outside consistently underestimate the other group's hope for peace
- Most Jewish Israelis and most Palestinians want to live peacefully in some form of co-existence when there is security and safety for all the people.

The path to peace will be very rocky and treacherous because there are strong forces on each side against peace, but it is more attainable if you support it. Here are some Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding organizations you might want to support: the [New Israel Fund](#); [Standing Together, Israel](#); [Combatants for Peace, Israel/Palestine](#); [The Parents Circle–Families Forum, Israel/Palestine](#); [Jerusalem Peacemakers CC](#); [SVF\(Social Venture Fund\) Israel Emergency Fund](#); and [Ajeec-Nisped \(Arab-Jewish Center for Empowerment, Equality, and Cooperation – Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Economic Development\)](#). Read their stories of Israeli Jews supporting Arabs, and of Arabs supporting Israeli Jews. Tell their stories to others. Send them money. Delegitimize the narrative that one side can win and destroy the other. Follow the courageous voices who call for recognition of the other.

Support the groups who are seeking a new government in Israel. If you live in the U.S., learn how to engage legislators through [J Street](#), an organization with decades of experience in Washington. It is the political home of pro-Israel, pro-peace, pro-democracy Americans.

Keep talking to people, keep an open mind, and take good care of yourself.