

teaching about the nature of life and the obligation to combat disease and save human lives.¹⁴ We thus supported enactments of the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act (HR 3) in the last congress which was vetoed by President Bush.

We appreciate Mr. Obama's commitment to support stem cell research and look forward to working with the Administration not only to fund such research adequately, but also to ensure that it is conducted within appropriate and necessary ethical guidelines.

VIII. DEATH PENALTY MORATORIUM

Judaism, like the world's other major religions, finds its sources of inspiration and moral guidance in the Bible. While the Bible clearly contemplates and condones the death penalty as the ultimate sanction within a legitimate legal system, our tradition simultaneously insists that capital punishment must be administered by a process which ensures accuracy as well as justice.

In recent years, too many questions have been raised as to whether the demand for accuracy is being met in America's courts in capital cases. Studies have indicated that there may be serious failings with regard to legal counsel and resources capital defendants are provided. Just as troubling are questions with regard to racial disparities within the justice system, particularly in capital cases. These questions must be answered and appropriate corrective measures must be put in place before we can proceed with additional executions in this country. *We therefore urge you to support efforts to place a moratorium, of limited duration, upon executions and appoint a special commission to study the manner in which capital cases and sentences are currently conducted.* Once the commission's findings and recommendations are implemented, America will feel more confident about its criminal justice system.

IX. MEDIA VIOLENCE AND PORNOGRAPHY

As a community adhering to traditional moral values, we are deeply concerned by the ever-growing tidal wave of violent and sexual media content that washes over our society and dulls our moral sensitivities. Parents are now confronting challenges from so many media fronts – television, film, records and, perhaps the most challenging, the internet and video games.

¹⁴http://www.ou.org/public_affairs/article/ou_rca_joint_statement_on_cloning_research_jewish_tradition_public_policy/





We agree with Mr. Obama's frequent statement in the campaign that parents have the central responsibility to raise their children and "turn off the TV..."

However, the Federal Trade Commission has found that America's large media companies have regularly undermined their professed commitment to parents embodied in their ratings systems by marketing inappropriately violent and sexual material to young children. We urge Mr. Obama to take early steps to put your Administration on the side of parents in this battle to influence the next generation of Americans. While we do not call for censorship, we do call for the media industry to act in a socially responsible manner and, failing that, *we look to the government to use its considerable powers of persuasion to get the industry to act in a responsible manner.*





FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES

I. THE U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

A. Overall Commitment

Mr. Obama and Mr. Biden spoke extensively during the campaign about their deep commitment to the security of the State of Israel. These clear and strong statements were watched very closely by our constituency and deeply appreciated.

We appreciate Mr. Obama's commitments to maintain Israel's qualitative military advantage over its hostile neighbors, continue American foreign aid to Israel and support Israel's actions in self-defense against Hamas, Hizbollah and all others who would imperil Israelis.¹⁵

B. Jerusalem

** Support a diplomatic 'atmosphere' to ensure that Jerusalem is not re-divided, as it is impractical and would imperil access to holy sites.*

The Orthodox Jewish community in particular appreciates Mr. Obama's statements that "Jerusalem is the capital of Israel" and that "as a practical matter" a re-division of the Holy City "would be very difficult to execute. And...that it is smart for us to work through a system in which everybody has access to the extraordinary religious sites in old Jerusalem."¹⁶

We suggest, and urge you to consider in your approach to this critical policy issue, that Mr. Obama is correct that the re-division of Jerusalem is impractical. Jerusalem is a diverse city where Jewish and Arab neighborhoods are scattered in a patchwork. It is not only impractical to divide the holy city, it would be unwise. Mr. Obama is also correct that we must ensure that people of every faith have access to all of the extraordinary religious sites of Jerusalem. History has shown that such access and freedom of worship has only existed with Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty. Merely four decades ago, when Arabs controlled the Old City, sacred places of worship were sacked and people were denied access to their holiest sites. And more recently, when synagogues in Gaza or Joseph's Tomb in Nablus came under Arab control, they too were destroyed.

¹⁵ <http://origin.barackobama.com/pdf/IsraelFactSheet.pdf>

¹⁶ <http://www.ou.org/public-affairs/article/ou-comments-on-further-clarification-of-jerusalem-statement>





Thus, using the criteria Mr. Obama set forth, the Administration ought to ensure that diplomatic discussions and “atmosphere” surrounding any Israeli-Palestinian discussions should be influenced to preserve the status quo of Jerusalem.

C. The Peace Process and “Two-State Solution”

** Pursue a “bottom-up” peace effort, as opposed to continuing the failed approach of seeking an agreement between leaders.*

We urge you to continue to recognize the extraordinary steps that Israel has taken in recent years for the sake of peace, only to have them rebuffed by the Palestinian Authority and other Arab regimes. During the campaign, Mr. Obama regularly noted that, even when making peace overtures, Israelis had to worry about terrorism when they rode a bus to work or sent their children off to school.

The United States has long played a constructive role in brokering Israeli-Arab negotiations and Mr. Obama has stated that the Administration will continue this effort. But we note that efforts by previous Administrations to produce the “comprehensive settlement” have not only failed time and again, but have consistently yielded higher levels of terrorism. *We suggest it is time for a different, more practical approach that does not aim for the “grand bargain” but works to build the context for peaceful coexistence from the grassroots up.*

In the face of peace process failures past and current, the notion of working to build the context of peace from the ground up has gained increasing support within Israeli and Palestinian circles.¹⁷ It is an approach the Obama Administration should pursue.

II. POLICY TOWARD IRAN

** Prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.*

Throughout the presidential campaign, Mr. Obama spoke clearly of his recognition of the threat an Iranian regime with nuclear weapons poses to the United States, Israel and other Western nations; so much so that we need not reiterate the discussion here. **We appreciate Mr. Obama’s statement that,**

¹⁷http://online.wsj.com/article_email/SB121815474002722569-1MyQjAxMDI4MTA4ODEwNTg0Wj.html and <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/21/AR2008092101126.html>





as president, he would do “everything...to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon...everything.”¹⁸

We stand ready to support your efforts to implement a comprehensive series of steps to realize this critical outcome.

III. INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The UOJCA joined with other concerned communities to support the enactment of legislation addressing the scourge of religious persecution around the world. This effort created an independent Commission on International Religious Freedom and a special ambassador-at large position for this purpose within the State Department. We urge you to fill this position early on in your Administration so that the United States can continue to press for the basic right of religious freedom around the world.

IV. ANTI-SEMITISM ABROAD

The UOJCA joined with other concerned organizations to support the enactment of legislation that created a special office within the State Department to monitor and combat anti-Semitism. This office has worked effectively with foreign governments to combat overt and sub-rosa anti-Semitism and we urge you to fill this position early in your Administration.

¹⁸ http://aipac.org/Publications/SpeechesByPolicymakers/PC_08_Obama.pdf
and http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2008/07/obama_under_the_microscope_in.html

