



**BRIT
TZEDEK
V'SHALOM**

JEWISH ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE & PEACE

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December 17, 2008

Dear President-elect Obama and the Members of the Transition Team,

I write on behalf of Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, the Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace, a grassroots organization of American Jews some 40,000 strong, with grassroots activists working in the Jewish community in 35 chapters across the country.

We are excited about working with your new administration, and bring with us the voices of the majority of American Jews who are looking forward to a new direction in the handling of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. You face many challenges in the year ahead, but on behalf of the majority of American Jews who believe that a near-term two-state resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in the best interests of both Americans and Israelis, we ask that you keep this issue high on the agenda during your first year in office.

Emblematic of this burgeoning support within the Jewish community is the overwhelming response to Brit Tzedek's Rabbinic Letter, which to date has garnered over 900 signers—rabbis, cantors, and rabbinical students—all calling on you to prioritize this issue high on your agenda, appoint a high-level envoy to the region, and ensure follow-through and enforcement of agreements reached. Prominent signers include*:

- **Rabbi Elliot Dorff** (Bel-Air, CA)—Rector and Professor of Philosophy at American Jewish University, Vice-Chair of the Conservative Movement's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, named one of Newsweek's Top 50 Influential Rabbis in America
- **Rabbi David Gordis (Newton, MA)**—Immediate past president and professor of Rabbinics at Hebrew College
- **Rabbi Peter Knobel** (Evanston, IL)—President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) and Rabbi of Beth Emet The Free Synagogue
- **Rabbi Jack L. Moline** (Alexandria, VA)—Rabbi of Agudas Achim Congregation and Vice-Chair of The Interfaith Alliance, named one of Newsweek's Top 25 Pulpit Rabbis in America
- **Rabbi Brant Rosen** (Evanston, IL)—Rabbi of the Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation, named one of Newsweek's Top 25 Pulpit Rabbis in America
- **Rabbi Ismar Schorsch** (New York, NY)—Former Chancellor of The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS)
- **Rabbi Toba Spitzer** (West Newton, MA)—President of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association and Rabbi of Congregation Dorshei Tzedek, named one of Newsweek's 50 Most Influential Rabbis in America and included in the Forward 50 list of America's most influential Jews.

* Affiliations for identification purposes only.



(A copy of the Rabbinic Letter and the complete signer list is attached, as well as a copy of our October 3 ad in the *Jewish Forward*.)

This is the first time in American history that more than 900 members of the Jewish clergy have signed on to such a statement—a reflection of the growing support in the Jewish community for a new and active policy. Indeed, a recent J Street poll showed that 87% of American Jews want the U.S. to play an active role in helping the parties resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

We urge you to act on this widespread desire for movement on this issue; our suggestions for how to proceed appear in a separate memo. Already, we are greatly heartened by your intentions outlined on your campaign website to pursue active diplomatic engagement on this issue.

We know that you see these issues as of paramount importance. Thank you for your leadership to date; we stand ready to help you move forward in this arena in any way we can.

Sincerely,

Diane Balsler
Executive Director
Brit Tzedek v'Shalom