



November 9th, 2020

To: Knesset and Cabinet Members

From: Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Matan Vilnai

Re: **The New US Administration – an opportunity for an Israeli Initiative**

In just over two months Joe Biden will be sworn in as the 46th president of the United States. All Israelis hope he will be successful in confronting the monumental challenges he faces, both domestic and external. After all, a strong United States is crucial to global and regional stability, and is a key factor in Israel's national security equation.

Israel's relationship with the US – in the security, political and other fields – deepened considerably under the Trump administration as exemplified by breakthroughs to normalization with several countries in the region, along with preparations for establishing relations with additional ones.

As he has repeatedly and consistently demonstrated throughout his 40-year career in public service, President-elect Biden is a true friend of Israel, sincerely committed to our security and wellbeing. He was vice president when the Obama administration committed to provide Israel with unprecedented levels of military aid for a decade beyond its tenure, with the then VP playing a role in negotiating that MOU. We have no doubt that the strategic alliance between Israel and the US will only grow stronger under his presidency.

The combination of this reaffirmation of the sustainability of our strategic alliance with the US and new regional opportunities requires -- and constitutes a most suitable foundation for -- an Israeli change of course. Instead of reacting to developments, we now have the need and opportunity to initiate meaningful change.

How the Palestinian issue is resolved will effect Israel's future. Its impact will be felt on our national security as on our very identity as a nation state. It is vital, therefore, that we take full advantage of current circumstances and the potential they offer to move **from managing the conflict to managing a solution.**



This will require us to take the initiative, combining military, political and economic measures, to promote separation from the Palestinians, ultimately leading to a negotiated two-state agreement.

A credible Israeli initiative will help persuade countries in the region, as well as the U.S. administration, to help us make this happen.

Taking the initiative will halt Israel's slide towards a unitary state for Israelis and Palestinians, one that is neither Jewish nor democratic. It will also set in motion a gradual and controlled process of separation from the Palestinians. During the course of this process, Israel will continue to maintain security control over the territories until alternative security arrangements, acceptable to Israel's political and military leadership, can be agreed upon and implemented.

In the final analysis, we cannot escape the reality and aspirations of three million Palestinians in the West Bank and two million more in Gaza. However, we can and must ensure a strong and sustainable Jewish majority for generations to come by leading a process of separation en route to a two-state reality.

On behalf of the hundreds of members of Commanders for Israel's Security, I call upon you to take advantage of regional developments, as well as the just reaffirmed durability of the security alliance with the United States, to promote Israel's supreme national interest: guaranteeing the future of the Zionist enterprise by carefully separating from the Palestinians.

Maj. Gen (Ret.) Matan Vilnai
Chair
Commanders for Israel's Security