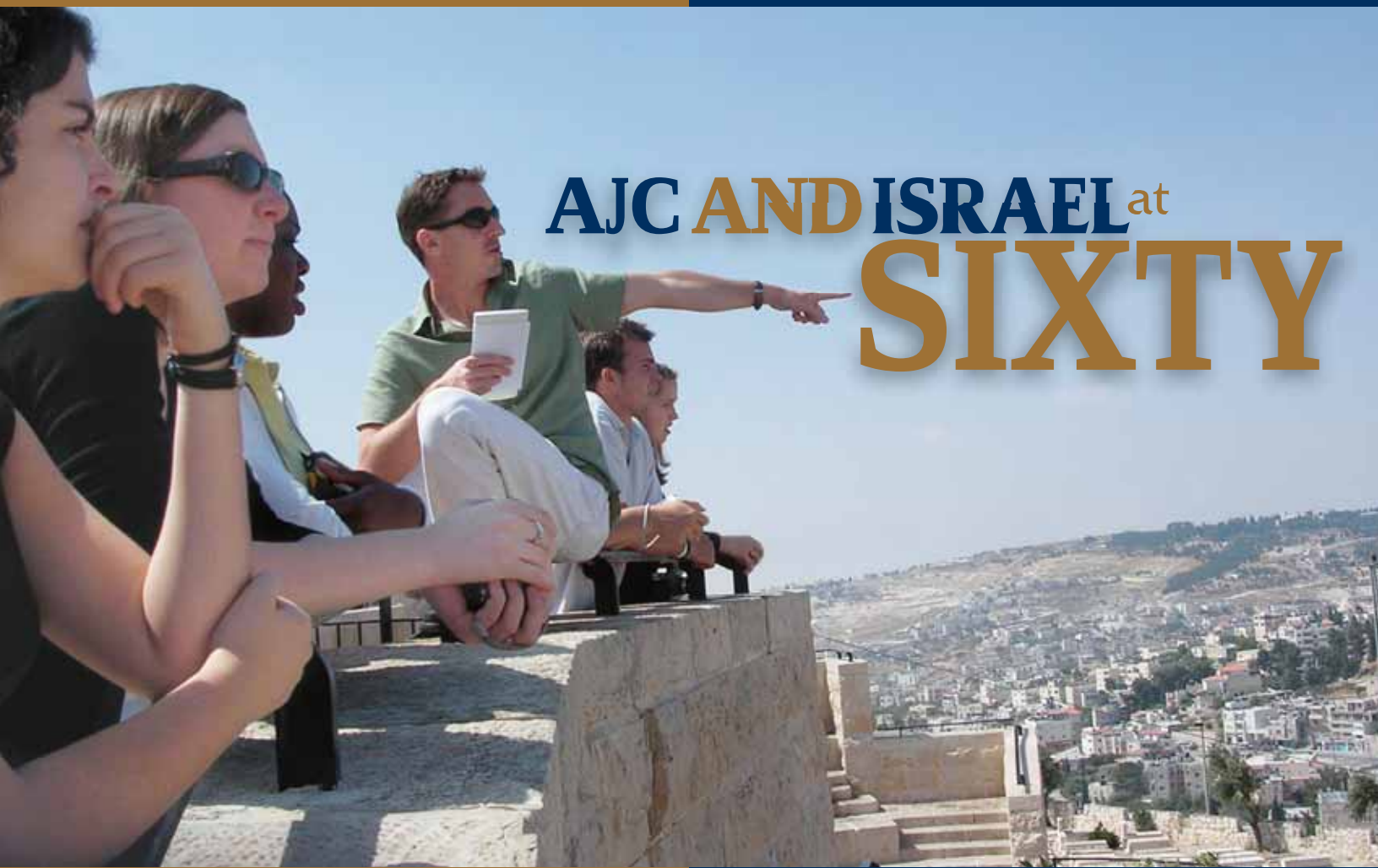




AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

The mission of **American Jewish Committee** is:

- To safeguard the welfare and security of Jews in the United States, in Israel, and throughout the world;
- To strengthen the basic principles of pluralism around the world as the best defense against anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry;
- To enhance the quality of American Jewish life by helping to ensure Jewish continuity, and;
- To deepen ties between American and Israeli Jews.

To learn more about our mission, programs, and publications, and to join and contribute to our efforts, please visit us at www.ajc.org or contact us by phone at 212-751-4000 or by e-mail at contribute@ajc.org.

AJC AND ISRAEL at
SIXTY

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

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In the Beginning

At the American Jewish Committee's 1959 Annual Meeting, Abba Eban, Israel's ambassador to the United States and permanent representative to the UN, had this to say:

At the great moment of transition in the life of our tormented people, the American Jewish Committee stood with the group of leaders who took control of our people's destiny. No one will ever forget how you stood in vigilant brotherhood at the cradle of our emergent statehood; and how you helped us lay the foundations of our international status and of our crucial friendship with the government and people of the American Republic. Faithful to your own American principles and to your sentiments of Jewish brotherhood, you were able to play an indispensable role.

Although AJC, founded in 1906, was not officially a Zionist organization, it lent its support to the Jewish community in the Land of Israel, the *yishuv*. As early as 1913 AJC called upon the U.S. State Department to persuade the Ottoman Turkish government to eliminate a requirement that Jews entering Palestine carry a special passport document.

In 1914, when Ottoman-controlled Palestine was cut off from Europe with the outbreak of World War I, AJC leaders sent vitally needed aid to the Jewish community there. In 1918, AJC expressed "whole-hearted sympathy" for the Balfour Declaration, in which the British government articulated its favorable view of the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine.

In the 1920s, AJC leaders were among the founders of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, which promoted Jewish settlement and the economic development of the Jewish community in Palestine, and of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

With the rise of Nazism in Europe, AJC consistently protested British limitations on Jewish immigration to Palestine. In 1943, when anti-Zionist members broke away to found the American Council for Judaism, AJC became more understanding of the need for a Jewish state.

After World War II, AJC used its influence to bolster the American government's insistence that Britain allow Jewish Holocaust survivors into Palestine. In 1947, AJC backed the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, and the next year, when the new State of Israel was attacked as soon as it declared its independence, AJC urged the United States and other democracies to halt Arab aggression.

AJC used its contacts in high places to help the new Jewish state. In September 1948, an AJC delegation visited President Harry Truman and urged him to confer *de jure* recognition on Israel and to support UN membership for Israel. Both steps were taken early in 1949. Similar meetings with high State Department officials and with the shah of Iran succeeded in keeping escape routes open for Jews from several Arab and Muslim countries to immigrate to Israel.

Building a New State

On April 3, 1949, a small plane landed at Lod Airport. On board were five leaders of the American Jewish Committee: President Jacob Blaustein, Executive Committee Chairman Irving Engel, and staff members John Slawson, Simon Segal, and Zachariah Shuster. They came at the invitation of Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion to survey the needs and prospects of the new Jewish state and to determine how AJC might help develop the Israeli economy. Though they held extensive meetings with Ben-Gurion and other officials, what impressed them most was the palpable energy pulsating through the country. From Jerusalem, they cabled AJC headquarters:

1948
In 1948
AJC visits President Truman to urge
legal recognition and UN membership
for Israel.

Israel is teeming with life and hope. Everywhere we found multitudes of people building roads and houses, working in factories, tilling the soil and reconstructing the country. One of the most important tasks of Jews in other countries is to do their utmost to help Israel become a viable, self-supporting state. We urge that continuous efforts be made to strengthen the foundations of the newborn state so that it shall be an outpost of democracy and a bastion of peace and progress.



Upon their return to the United States, the AJC leaders expressed optimism about Israel's security, believing that the Arab world would eventually accept a Jewish state, if Cold War politics were kept out of the Middle East. What Israel needed most, they said, was not philanthropy but foreign loans and massive capital investment from American entrepreneurs to create housing and employment for the thousands of immigrants pouring into the country.

While there was little beyond exhortation that AJC could do to bring in private capital, its contacts encouraged a favorable U.S. government attitude toward aid for Israel. AJC meetings at the White House and the State Department helped secure a \$100 million loan from the Export-Import Bank to develop the Israeli economy, and an additional \$35 million loan for Israeli agriculture in 1951. Annual grants-in-aid to Israel, also urged by AJC, began in 1952, in time providing hundreds of millions of dollars for immigrant absorption and development.

AJC's role in the delicate negotiations with the Federal Republic of Germany for Holocaust restitution and reparations also helped secure Israel's economic survival during the crucial time of nation-building and mass *aliyah*, when immigration tripled Israel's population within a few short years. Largely through the efforts of Nahum Goldmann and AJC president Jacob Blaustein—respectively president and senior vice president of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany—Israel received goods and services worth hundreds of millions of dollars from West Germany, and individual survivors, many of whom were creating new lives in the Jewish state, were granted reparations for what they had suffered.

The Blaustein Ben-Gurion Agreement

In addition to political and economic help, AJC provided indispensable legitimacy for the Jewish state on the American scene. Even after the establishment of Israel, the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism continued its public campaign against the idea of a Jewish state, arguing that American Jews who supported Israel were guilty of dual loyalty. Not only did such propaganda give ammunition to anti-Semites, but it also played into the hands of Arabists in the State Department who were eager to discredit mainstream Jewish organizations that backed Israel.

Against the background of these tensions, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion invited AJC's top leadership to consult with him in Jerusalem on American Jewish-Israeli relations. On August 23, 1950, Ben-Gurion and AJC president Jacob Blaustein reached an historic accord. Ben-Gurion acknowledged that the government of Israel spoke only for its own citizens, "and in no way presumes to represent or speak in the name of Jews who are citizens of any other country." For his part, Blaustein noted that, while American Jews considered the United States their home, "the vast majority of American Jewry recognizes the necessity and desirability of helping to make Israel a strong, reliable and self-supporting state."

The Blaustein Ben-Gurion agreement—clarifying the responsibility of the American Jewish community to aid the Jewish state even as its political allegiance remained exclusively American—had a profound influence. While charges of dual loyalty did not disappear, they became increasingly confined to fringe hate groups, and the American Council for Judaism dwindled into insignificance.

Israel's Friends in High Places

Meanwhile, AJC closely monitored the situation in the Middle East. Maintaining close contact with the Israeli embassy in Washington, AJC leaders often met with American government officials about troubling Soviet arms sales to Arab nations, the Arab economic boycott of Israel, border raids against the Jewish state, and the failure of the UN to keep peace in the region. To counter the massive Arab arms buildup, AJC called for the United States to sell defensive weapons to Israel. So active was AJC in tending to Israel's concerns in Washington that Golda Meir, who would later serve as prime minister, once recalled that Jacob Blaustein enjoyed better access to high officials in the Eisenhower administration than Israel's own diplomats did.

AJC utilized this influence in the aftermath of the Sinai Campaign of 1956, when Israel, in coordination with Britain and France, invaded and occupied the Sinai Peninsula to wipe out Arab commando bases and end the Egyptian blockade on Israeli shipping through the Strait of Tiran. Israeli ambassador Eban sought AJC's help in explaining his nation's case to the U.S. government. Rather than just calling for an Israeli pullback, AJC urged Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to remove the underlying cause of the conflict by insisting that Arab states negotiate peace with Israel or, minimally, to secure a UN presence in Sinai and freedom of navigation for Israeli ships through the strait. When Egypt used the occasion to persecute Egyptian Jews, AJC quietly helped arrange their emigration and resettlement in Israel and elsewhere.

In the late 1950s, AJC focused on the pernicious ramifications of the Arab economic war against Israel. AJC pointed out that the rights of Americans were being violated: Arab states discriminated against American businesses owned or run by Jews, sought to keep American Jews from entering these countries, and opposed the assignment of American Jewish soldiers in their territory. In 1960, AJC accused certain U.S. government agencies of cooperating with such Arab policies, and the next year asked for legislation that would deny U.S. loans or grants to any country "which discriminates against American citizens." In 1962, AJC leaders met with President John F. Kennedy to discuss the issue. As a result of AJC diplomacy, the United States induced several Arab nations to quietly drop their restrictions on Jews.

A Presence in Israel

Already at this time AJC understood that international diplomacy, while vital, was not the only arena for American Jewry to help Israel. Foreseeing and lamenting a process of gradual distancing between American and Israeli Jews, AJC sought to bolster ties between the two Jewries by establishing a permanent office in Israel—the first set up by any American Jewish civic organization. Announced in 1961, the office opened in Tel Aviv the next year. Its primary function was to educate Israelis about Jewish life in the United States and other Diaspora communities so as to maintain a sense of a common Jewish culture. The AJC Israel office published a Hebrew-language magazine about Jewish issues, sponsored research and publications on the attitudes of Israeli Jews to the Diaspora, and arranged exchange programs for Israelis and American Jews. The Israel office also served as AJC's eyes and ears in Israel, providing AJC leadership with regular reports on trends in the Jewish state that might impact on the formulation of AJC policy.

1961
In 1961

**AJC becomes the first
American Jewish organization
to establish an office in Israel.**



AJC's Israel office quickly established itself as a vital factor on the Israeli scene. It developed strong ties with the academic community and the political leadership, and its library—containing books and periodicals about Diaspora Jewry as well as all AJC publications—was recognized as a unique resource in Israeli cultural life. Its office staff met, and continues to meet, with Israeli groups, from members of Knesset to high school students, to talk about American Jewry.

Standing Up for Israel

In May 1967, the UN, on Egypt's insistence, removed its peacekeeping force from the border with Israel, Egyptian troops massed in the Sinai, and Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser announced the closing of the Strait of Tiran to Israeli shipping. AJC immediately called on American officials to reaffirm the U.S. commitment to Israel's security, and AJC's honorary president Jacob Blaustein met privately with Secretary of State Dean Rusk about the crisis. On the morning of June 5, besieged and publicly threatened with extinction, Israel launched a preemptive strike. Jordan joined the anti-Israel coalition, despite Israeli pleas to it to stay out, and the Jewish state had to fight on three fronts. An emergency leadership meeting at AJC headquarters resulted in a telephone call to Assistant Secretary of State Eugene Rostow asking for an off-the-record meeting with the president. That proved unnecessary: A few hours later, AJC learned that the Israelis had routed their enemies. In six days,

Israel captured the Sinai from Egypt, the West Bank—including the Old City of Jerusalem—from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria.

The weeks of trepidation about Israel's survival, followed by the relief of victory, had a profound impact on AJC. President Morris Abram declared that the crisis had taught American Jews that "they do hold one thing in common with Jews everywhere, and that is a particular vulnerability.... Jewish life in the Diaspora is inextricably intertwined with the survival of Jewish life in Israel." Symbolically endorsing the unification of Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty, AJC moved its Israel office from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. It quickly set up joint Arab-Jewish dialogues, hoping that the inter-group-relations techniques pioneered on the American scene might help ease Arab-Jewish tensions in the reunited city. Years later, Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kollek asserted that whatever degree of Arab-Jewish understanding was achieved in his city "could not have come about without AJC as a catalytic agent."

After the war, AJC mobilized its resources to support the victorious Israelis against the charge that they were aggressors and conquerors. The national office and field staff across the country monitored the media for anti-Semitic statements. AJC convened prominent public relations professionals to determine how Israel might best present its viewpoint. AJC offices in Europe and Latin American provided extensive reports on public opinion there. The Interreligious Affairs Department—shocked to find, after extensive discussions with Christian leaders, that few were willing to express solidarity with Israel—insisted that future interreligious dialogue address the theological implications of the Jewish attachment to Israel.

When Arab anger in the wake of the Six-Day War led to mob attacks on the allegedly "Zionist" Jewish communities in Egypt, Iraq, Libya, and Syria, AJC used quiet diplomacy with the U.S. State Department, representatives of other nations, the UN, and the Red Cross to help protect these Jews and provide safe passage out of these countries.

Interpreting Israel's Position

Over the next several years, AJC faced an accelerating propaganda campaign against Israel. A significant number of American intellectuals, college students, and opponents of the Vietnam War viewed Israeli occupation of “Arab” lands as part of an imperialist conspiracy against Third World peoples. AJC sponsored research showing that this anti-Israel barrage was often led by Arab front organizations and financed by oil-rich Arab states. In its ongoing dialogues with Christian, black, and white ethnic groups, AJC stressed that Israel had fought to defend itself and wanted nothing more than peace with its neighbors. And since some of the more prominent campus radicals who denounced Israel were themselves Jewish, AJC instituted an annual two-week mission to Israel for young American academics. On their return, many of these men and women, profoundly moved by the reality of a vibrant Jewish state so different from the “imperialist” stereotype, became role models of Jewish pride on their campuses.

When Egypt and Syria surprised Israel by launching the Yom Kippur War in 1973, AJC once again stood foursquare with Israel. It used secret diplomatic channels—through the Vatican and the Red Cross—to seek humane treatment for Israeli POWs in Arab hands. It set up a press conference in Washington for Israeli officials to present their country's point of view to the American people. It sponsored pro-Israel broadcasts on radio stations across the United States.

The Yom Kippur War crisis demonstrated that AJC's domestic coalitional work with American religious, ethnic, and racial groups could help Israel's cause in the United States. Since the 1967 war—when AJC had been shocked to find that many such groups had no idea of how significant Israel was to American Jewry—AJC has educated them about Israel through extensive inter-group dialogues. Thus, in 1973, AJC was able to arrange a joint statement signed by Christian, black, and white ethnic leaders expressing support for Israel.

The 1973 war brought fears of an energy shortage as Arab countries cut oil exports. Some argued that Israeli intransigence was to blame, and that if the Western nations induced Israel to make territorial concessions, the Arab oil producers would reverse their course. Once again, AJC fought back. Its newly formed Committee on Energy met with the executives of American oil companies in an effort to convince them that the oil shortage had deep-seated economic and strategic causes that had little to do with Israel. It issued publications making the same point, including a newsletter, *Petro-Impact*, which exposed a major campaign of Arab penetration of the American economy. AJC launched a campaign for a long-term national energy program to decrease U.S. dependence on Arab oil by seeking other producers, increasing energy efficiency, and researching alternative energy sources.

Fighting “Zionism-Is-Racism” and Other Ominous Developments

In November 1975, the UN General Assembly passed its notorious resolution equating Zionism with racism. Denouncing the resolution as an “outrage,” AJC called on the United States to reassess its participation in the UN, and—once again utilizing its domestic coalitional connections—immediately arranged for twenty-six ethnic and other minority groups to issue a statement decrying the resolution as “a blatant lie.” Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the U.S. ambassador to the UN in 1975, recalled that AJC “was one of the very few groups that was with us from the beginning” in fighting the resolution.

AJC continued to combat the Arab economic boycott as well. In 1975, as a result of a private meeting with AJC leaders, Federal Reserve Board chairman Arthur Burns instructed regional Federal Reserve banks to encourage member banks not to participate in letters of credit that might further the Arab boycott of Israel.

AJC, in cooperation with the American Jewish Congress and Anti-Defamation League, entered into intensive negotiations with the Business Roundtable,

1973
**During the 1973 Yom Kippur War,
AJC secretly brokers humane treatment
for Israeli POWs.**

which represented business interests fearful that an aggressive American anti-boycott policy would threaten the country's economic interests in the Middle East and cost American jobs. The outcome of these negotiations was the passage of a landmark 1977 federal law prohibiting individuals or companies "to comply with, further or support any boycott" against a friendly nation.

In 1975, AJC was one of the first to call attention to another ominous development: Arab penetration of American universities through the endowment of Middle East Studies chairs or centers which were obliged, under the terms of the gifts, to hire faculty acceptable to the donors—i.e., pro-Arab propagandists. AJC met with top administrators of leading universities to alert them that such arrangements endangered the integrity of the academic enterprise. As a result, AJC drew up suggested guidelines for universities, spelling out conditions that rendered a gift suspect. At least three major institutions—the University of Southern California, the University of Pennsylvania, and Georgetown—turned down Arab money on the basis of AJC's guidelines

Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations

In 1982, AJC opened a new vista in its Israel programming that remains unique and relevant today. Upon his retirement as AJC's executive vice president, Bertram Gold established the AJC Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations. Gold observed, "The relationship between American Jewry and Israel that has existed during the past four decades is not inevitable and cannot be taken for granted." Acting on this concern, he launched the Institute as "an American-centered enterprise that will seek to study the changing nature of the relationship between American Jews and Israel." The first chairman of the Institute Advisory Board was Stuart Eizenstat, who had been President Jimmy Carter's chief domestic policy advisor and later under secretary of commerce for international trade in the Clinton administration.



Among the Institute's signature activities were its exchange programs. Beginning in 1982, groups of Israeli emerging leaders in a wide variety of fields—government, the army, culture, law, religion, education, the media—were brought to the United States for an immersion experience in American Jewish life. Participants were consistently impressed with the vitality and diversity they saw in the American Jewish community, which differed significantly from the stereotypes they came with. Hundreds of Israelis, many of whom went on to become cabinet ministers, members of Knesset, and senior military officers, participated in these dialogue-oriented missions, cosponsored by the Institute and its Israeli partners, the Jerusalem Municipality, the Oranim Teacher Training Institute, and Israel's Ministry of Education. In 1988, the Institute initiated a similar program to bring emerging American Jewish leaders to Israel. In recent years, the Israel National Defense College has sent its entire class of graduates to AJC Annual Meetings, both as an educational experience for them, to raise their awareness of American Jewry as Israel's strategic resource, and to provide an opportunity for American Jews to dialogue with them.

Over the years, the Institute has made many significant contributions. It coproduced a three-part series on the connection between American Jews and Israel, "Distant Relatives," that appeared on prime-time Israeli TV. It also conducted surveys to measure Israeli perceptions of American Jewry.

As the first Jewish organization to campaign against the "Zionism-is-Racism" resolution, AJC pursues a sixteen-year effort for its repeal.

An African American Christian leadership group visits Israel under the auspices of Project Interchange.



In 2001 the Institute was renamed the Koppelman Institute for American-Jewish Israeli Relations, in honor of Dorothy and Julius Koppelman. Its focus shifted somewhat—given the outbreak of Palestinian violence and the renewed challenge to Israel’s standing on campus and in certain sectors of American society—from reaching out to Israelis to help them understand American Jewry to enhancing the image of Israel in the U.S. and throughout the Diaspora. Under the direction of Steven Bayme, the Institute has created programs to improve the image of Israel within American culture and to respond to the intellectual assault on the legitimacy of Zionism as an expression of the Jewish people’s desire for a national existence. The current chair is Dr. Harold Shapiro, president emeritus of Princeton University. Professor Itamar Rabinovich, president emeritus of Tel Aviv University, has served as the Israel chair of the Institute.

Institute publications over the years focused on issues of common interest to the two Jewish communities, such as the role of American *olim* in various aspects of Israeli life, the disparate ways that Jewishness is understood in the two communities, religious pluralism in Israel and the United States, and the status of the different Jewish denominational movements in Israel. More recently, publications have aimed to demystify Israel in American eyes and to assess the impact of Israel on Diaspora Jewish identity. In the first category have been studies of the diminishing gaps in socioeconomic parameters between Israeli Arabs and Jews and the impact of American Jewry

on the Israeli economy. In the latter category have been responses of American Jewry to the second intifada in Israel, to the Kinneret Agreement (a statement of the social contract among the Jewish people), and to remarks made questioning the value and meaning of Diaspora life.

Among the newest and most effective projects of the Koppelman Institute has been the Brandeis-AJC Summer Institute for Israel Studies, now in its fifth year. This program brings university faculty to Brandeis University for a three-week intensive summer study seminar that enables them to create or update courses on modern Israel on their home campuses. As of 2008, the Institute had produced new courses on contemporary Israel on fifty-two campuses, and some 1,500 students had been reached as a result.

Project Interchange

AJC also conducts a unique program for non-Jewish leaders and opinion-makers to help them experience Israel in ways relevant to their interests. Project Interchange, which was launched in 1982 to conduct seminars in Israel for influential Americans, became a part of AJC in 1992.

Since then, Project Interchange has expanded its programs so that today there are more than 4,000 alumni holding key positions in all sectors of American life. Among the groups that Project Interchange has brought to Israel on tailored programs are members of Congress, congressional staffers, state and local

officials, Catholic bishops, national women leaders, African-American clergy, Asian American leaders, Rhodes scholars, ethnic media representatives, Latino leaders, university chancellors, Muslim moderates, student-body presidents, and planners of the Smithsonian's African-American museum—and the list is hardly exhaustive.

In 2002, Project Interchange expanded its horizons to reach out to influential groups around the world. Since 2005 some 400 international leaders have visited Israel on Project Interchange seminars. Among the groups who have benefited from these encounters with Israeli culture, society, and politics have been European and Latin American parliamentarians, East European diplomats, Italian journalists, Latino bishops, European counterterrorism experts, Turkish policy analysts, Thai security officials, and an Indian Muslim peace delegation.

The purpose of these seminars—described by the *Washington Jewish Week* as “brilliant in its simplicity”—is to let these leaders see Israel as it is. They meet with Israeli cabinet ministers, Knesset members from all parties, Palestinian leaders, prominent educators, businesspeople, religious figures, academicians, and media personnel from both the Jewish and Arab communities. They also encounter social activists, students, new immigrants, and Israelis whose specific interests coincide with theirs.

Project Interchange has had a noticeable impact on the opinion molders it has brought to Israel. On their return home, they bring a more nuanced understanding of Israeli affairs, and this new expertise carries over into their professional and communal activities. For example, Latino leaders who visited Israel in 2006 through Project Interchange issued an historic statement on their return, calling for enhanced relationships between the Latino and Jewish communities, including better understanding of Israel in the Latino community. The 2007 mission of Indian Muslim religious leaders, who came despite protests at home, was described by Israel's president Shimon Peres as “of the utmost importance to the Jewish people.”

Reaffirming the Trust: The First Gulf War

In December 1990, after Iraq had overrun Kuwait, the threat of imminent war hung over Israel. If the U.S. were to intervene, Iraq threatened to launch missiles—possibly equipped with chemical and biological poisons—at Israel. A good number of American Jewish organizations that had planned visits to Israel canceled. Not the American Jewish Committee. On short notice, 125 AJC leaders came to spend a week in Israel that December, dubbing their visit “Operation Undaunted.” There was a tremendous outpouring of appreciation on the part of Israelis who met the AJCers.

And that was not all. On January 21, 1991, as the First Gulf War began, three AJC leaders—President Sholom Comay, Board Chairman Alfred Moses, and Executive Director David Harris—returned to Israel to reinforce the message that Israelis were not alone. They constituted the very first solidarity group to arrive once the war started. Less than an hour after they checked into their hotel, sirens went off. The visitors were ushered into “safe rooms,” instructed to close the doors, seal the edges with tape, place a wet towel along the bottom, don gas masks, and turn on the radio for instructions. Iraqi Scud missiles were falling. The experience was repeated several times during the trip.

This AJC act of solidarity was not its only means of support for Israel in the crisis. AJC published numerous op-eds and letters to the editors, and AJC spokespersons appeared on television and radio programs, explaining Israel's precarious situation. AJC placed a full-page ad in the *New York Times*, signed by hundreds of ethnic, racial, and religious leaders, voicing solidarity with the people of Israel.

1991
**During the first Gulf War
AJC is the very first solidarity group
to arrive in Israel
as the Scuds are falling.**

Diplomatic Activity

Israel's international isolation during the Gulf War prompted AJC to expand its diplomatic initiatives, which already focused heavily on furthering Israel's cause. For years, AJC leaders had been traveling to world capitals for substantive, high-level discussions. In 1991, AJC devised a new medium for influencing the international community to back Israel's yearning for peace. Since most of the world's foreign ministers gathered in New York in the fall for the opening of the UN General Assembly session, why not schedule meetings with them? While AJC had previously met with many high-ranking foreign diplomats, these annual fall meetings would serve to regularize these interchanges and allow relations with key countries to develop over time.

What began as a series of meetings with four foreign ministers in 1991 snowballed by 2007 into a seventy-meeting marathon. Significantly, a number of these sessions have been with the foreign ministers of Arab and Muslim nations, some of which do not even recognize Israel. This indicates the widespread perception in foreign capitals that AJC carries influence and can serve as an effective back channel.

The Israeli government, for its part, has expressed appreciation for AJC's diplomatic initiatives. In fact, Ambassador Michael Shilo, former deputy director-general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, declared: "If Israel were to privatize its foreign policy, the American Jewish Committee would be the leading candidate."

In at least two historic cases—the decisions by Germany and Japan to cease cooperation with the Arab boycott of Israel—the countries involved credited AJC with convincing them to make a change. German chancellor Helmut Kohl, after being pressed repeatedly by AJC, first announced his country's shift in policy through a letter to AJC. And one of the top Japanese diplomats involved in his country's decision publicly credited AJC's long-term "dignified, low-key, equitable" dialogue with his country as the reason for Japan's action in ending the embargo, as well as for its warming ties with Israel since the late 1980s.

AJC also deployed its clout in a campaign to repeal the infamous UN resolution accusing Zionism of being a form of racism, which entered its final phase when AJC sponsored an international conference on the issue at the U.S. mission to the UN in November 1990. AJC ran a full-page *New York Times* ad, signed by its coalition partners in the ethnic and religious communities, calling for repeal. After repeal was officially voted on December 16, 1991, newspapers reported that AJC had helped convince the governments of Japan and South Korea, among others, to cosponsor the repeal resolution. The next week AJC published another *Times* ad, thanking by name all the countries that had voted for repeal.

Another long but ultimately successful diplomatic campaign waged by AJC was for the admission of Magen David Adom, Israel's humanitarian relief organization, into the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. For decades the world body refused to recognize the symbol of the Red Shield of David and so excluded Israel from participation in the international movement. AJC launched a letter-writing and ad campaign in the late 1990s, as well as significant diplomatic advocacy. Finally, in June 2006, employing the compromise that the star be displayed within a red crystal, Israel's Magen David Adom was approved for full membership. Jakob Kellenberger, the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, stated, "I have appreciated the trust and support from AJC. It has been very precious to me."

1991
In 1991,
Japan credits AJC diplomacy
for Tokyo's decision to renounce
the Arab boycott of Israel.

Beit Moses, the Moses Building

On December 9, 1995, AJC's Israel programs acquired a magnificent new home base in the heart of Jerusalem with the dedication of Beit Moses—the Moses Building—as the organization's new Israel office. Ambassador to Romania Alfred H. Moses, an honorary president of AJC, his wife, Carol Moses, and his sisters, Mrs. Amalie Kass and Mrs. Claire Lovett, dedicated the building in memory of their beloved parents, Leslie and Helene Moses. In addition to AJC offices, the building houses spacious conference facilities and a library on American Jewish life, widely used by Israeli researchers. The office staff, beyond providing stimulating programs to the Israeli public, is deeply involved in planning the itineraries and speakers for Project Interchange seminars.

In addition to housing the Israel and Middle East Office, Beit Moses also serves as the headquarters for AJC's international interreligious operations. Rabbi David Rosen, a world leader in interreligious dialogue, lives and works in Jerusalem while weaving a worldwide network of interfaith relations for AJC, thus symbolizing the agency's commitment to the role of Jerusalem in Jewish life.

Seeking Avenues for Peace

Always attentive to Israel's quest for peace, AJC supported the Oslo Accords of 1993 between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. In subsequent meetings with American policymakers and foreign leaders—including President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, King Hussein of Jordan, and PLO chairman Yasir Arafat—AJC did its utmost to facilitate the peace process, while never losing sight of the perils Israel faced. AJC was the first Jewish group to visit Bahrain, Kuwait, Mauritania, and Qatar to advance Arab-Israeli ties, and among the very first to travel to Saudi Arabia, always insisting on using American passports with Israeli entry stamps. AJC was also the first group to cross by land from Egypt to Israel. When Mauritania established full diplomatic relations with Israel, AJC teamed with the Israeli aid agency Mashav to build an oncology hospital in Nouakchott.



Honorary AJC President Alfred H. Moses, left, affixes a mezuzah to AJC's Jerusalem office, Beit Moses.

AJC's Israel/Middle East office convened off-the-record meetings at Beit Moses and elsewhere—"track-two diplomacy"—where influential Israeli and Palestinian leaders exchanged ideas, outside the glare of publicity, for promoting peace. In 1997 AJC established the Harriet and Robert Heilbrunn Institute for International Interreligious Understanding, to help improve relations between Muslims and Jews.

The assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in the fall of 1995 by a fellow Jew sent shockwaves through the Jewish world and roused AJC to action. It was AJC that first proposed the Madison Square Garden memorial event, addressed by Vice President Al Gore, Shimon Peres, and Leah Rabin, that drew over 15,000 people on a bitterly cold December 10. The following day, AJC convened a national symposium to address the fissures in the Jewish community revealed by the assassination, asking "Are We Still One People?" AJC also published a booklet containing the viewpoints of symposium speakers and other Jewish thinkers about the prospects for Jewish unity.

In the spring of 1998, to mark Israel's fiftieth anniversary, AJC ran a series of ads in major newspapers on the theme "What Israel Means to Me." The first ad highlighted statements of ten U.S. presidents, from Truman to Clinton. Also, AJC published a symposium on the significance of Israel, with the participation of leading Israeli and American Jewish observers.

In July 2000, as the Camp David II talks progressed, with President Clinton pressing Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat to come to an agreement, AJC President Bruce Ramer and Executive Director David A. Harris wrote a letter to Barak, stating, "We ... stand ready to support you ... in the risks Israel assumes for a secure peace." The letter appeared as an ad in the *Washington Post*.

In 2006, UN Watch organizes the First Annual Holocaust Remembrance Day in Geneva.



UN Activism

In the nineties, AJC took on a project of great significance—convincing the UN to treat Israel fairly. This effort involved activism in New York, Geneva, Durban, and at diplomatic meetings around the world.

Despite the repeal of the Zionism-is-racism canard, Israel still faced tremendous hurdles at the UN. It remained the only member state unable to present its candidature for a seat on the Security Council or key UN committees because it lacked the backing of a regional group. The Asian group, to which geographically it belonged, would not admit Israel, due to Arab and Muslim influence. The West European and Others Group (WEOG), which includes a number of democratic nations outside Europe, was Israel's only avenue for admission. Concluding that WEOG was Israel's only viable option, AJC mounted a campaign to shape public opinion and gain political support.

In the fall of 1997, AJC ran a dramatic ad in the *New York Times*, the *International Herald Tribune*, and a score of local American papers. On the left side of the page were listed the 184 member states eligible for the Council, and on the right was one—Israel—that was not. The AJC ad urged readers to send coupons to UN officials calling for Israel's admission to WEOG. The ad was reprinted several times. It came to the attention of U.S. ambassador Richard Holbrooke, who shared it with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. The U.S. then went to work on the issue.

When Israel finally achieved provisional acceptance to WEOG in 2000, Israel's UN ambassador, Dore Gold, remarked, "The American Jewish Committee has changed history."

In 1993, Morris Abram, a former U.S. ambassador to the UN and honorary AJC president, founded UN Watch in Geneva. Its mandate: to monitor the performance of the UN and its affiliates and their adherence to the UN charter, and to call attention to instances when Israel is held to a double standard. In 1999 UN Watch became an affiliate institute of AJC. From its perch in Geneva, UN Watch has followed the activities of a number of UN agencies, particularly the UN Commission on Human Rights, which seemed to specialize in coddling egregious rights abusers in the Third World while accusing Israel of "war crimes."

When the Commission on Human Rights became the UN Human Rights Council in 2006, hopes for reform and change were voiced by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan—but the Council did not improve: During its first year of existence, UNHRC singled out Israel by name nine times while not calling any other country to task for abuses. UN Watch publishes annual reports assessing the fairness of the Council's actions, and Hillel Neuer, director of UN Watch, speaks out vigorously, denouncing the hypocrisy of the condemnations and suggesting better mechanisms for addressing human rights abuses. In a speech before the Council in March 2007, Neuer condemned the "terrible lies and moral inversion" that had turned the human rights "dream into a nightmare." After the Council president ruled his statement "inadmissible," a video of Neuer's speech received over 300,000 hits on YouTube.

Ironically, one of the worst forums for the expression of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism in the new millennium was the UN-sponsored 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban. In the run-up to the conference, AJC worked, through its affiliate, the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights, to urge that anti-Semitism be recognized as a form of racial discrimination and to stress the need to monitor it. In preparatory meetings, AJC leaders consulted with U.S. administration officials to warn against a resurrection of the Zionism-is-racism equation and the misappropriation of Holocaust rhetoric.

Executive Director David A. Harris, invited by Secretary of State Colin Powell to be part of the official U.S. delegation to the conference, did not go when the U.S. pulled out, refusing to participate in a hatefest. “The Durban gathering will be the setting for spreading bigotry against Jews, trivializing the Holocaust, denigrating Jews, and contributing to the Arab campaign to delegitimize the State of Israel,” he said.

Some AJC representatives did participate in the NGO conference parallel to the official Durban UN conference, where they were assaulted with literature and resolutions expressing hatred of Israel. Ultimately, the Jewish groups walked out of a meeting where the NGOs adopted viciously anti-Israel statements, and developed their own statement, which asserted that the NGO declaration “took the vision of the equality of all nations large and small in the United Nations Charter and barred the State of Israel.”

“And Then We Got Mugged in 2000”

After consistently backing Israel’s quest for peace, security, and normalization through the decade of the nineties, AJC was stunned and saddened by the spiraling Palestinian violence that began in September 2000, which came to be called the second intifada (although it was never an “uprising” in the true sense). Rejecting Prime Minister Barak’s far-reaching peace proposals, Yasir Arafat instigated a calculated campaign of terror, which included suicide bombings against buses, restaurants, and shopping malls. In response, AJC took out an ad signed by 300 clergy, civic, and political leaders, stating, “We Stand with Israel/ We Stand for Peace.” Richard Sideman, chair of AJC’s International Relations Commission, convened an international policy conference in Washington, focusing on terrorism against Israel. AJC also issued a critique of media coverage and anti-Israel cartoons published in the European press.

Another AJC response to the violence was solidarity missions, when few American Jews were traveling to Israel. After a suicide bomb took twenty-one young lives at a Tel Aviv disco, AJC sent a delegation to Israel, including representatives from worldwide Jewish communities, in July 2001. AJC president Harold Tanner, who led the mission, explained its goal, “For us it was vital to see and hear what it means to live with daily threats.... And for the Israelis we met with, our presence also sent a clear message about AJC’s determination to help Israel through difficult times, confirming words with deeds.” Some of the group went on to Germany, where they received assurances from Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, who had just been to Israel himself and had witnessed the horror firsthand, that his country would stand by Israel.

As tensions remained high in 2002, AJC organized two more “Undaunted, We Stand with Israel” missions—bringing some one hundred American Jews in May and another ninety in August. “We need to continue traveling to Israel, in spite of the dangers or, yes, maybe because of the dangers,” said Executive Director David A. Harris. “We cannot allow Israelis to feel alone and abandoned.” And again in June 2003 an AJC-organized delegation of North Americans and Europeans, including a sizable group of new Americans from the former Soviet Union, traveled to Israel to show support and to meet with members of the diplomatic corps stationed there.

2000
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Looking for closer-to-home ways to express solidarity, AJC organized a “Made in Israel” campaign, encouraging its members to buy Israeli cosmetics, clothing, food, wine, artwork, and jewelry to strengthen the battered Israeli economy. AJC Chapter offices were instructed to buy Israeli goods whenever possible for AJC events, and the AJC Web site offered an extensive list of Israeli products that could be purchased online.

Characteristically, AJC swung into high gear with its diplomatic and informational efforts on behalf of Israel. Under the auspices of the Madeline and Bruce Ramer Institute for Diplomatic Relations, AJC expanded its “diplomatic marathon,” conducting more private bilateral meetings with high-level diplomats than most independent countries in the same time-frame. AJC found pro-Israel support among the newly democratic nations of Eastern and Central Europe, such as Bulgaria, Poland, and Romania. Faced with common threats from Islamic terrorist groups, Israel and India developed a special relationship, and AJC helped by visiting the region, sending humanitarian aid in the wake of earthquakes and tsunamis, and creating ties with the Indian-American community. AJC also reached out to key segments of the Arab world, meeting with leaders of Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Qatar, and other Gulf states.

In the battle for ideas, AJC broadened its media and public information campaign in many directions, devoting newspaper ads and op-eds, David Harris’s bi-weekly (later weekly) radio addresses, publications, and Web site content to the Israeli perspective, often overlooked in the press. Eran Lerman, director of AJC’s Israel/Mideast Office, writes a weekly analysis—sometimes several times a week, when crises proliferate—of Israel’s situation from the political, strategic, economic, and often personal points of view. His re-

ports, disseminated to the AJC leadership and posted on the AJC Web site, brought home what Israelis were going through as the conflict dragged on.

Under the rubric of a “Perspectives from Israel” series, personal essays by leading writers such as Yossi Klein Halevi, Daniel Gordis, and Yair Sheleg gave voice to the moral dilemmas Israelis faced and the internal debates that were raging. AJC’s Berlin office published a study of the biased German media coverage of the intifada. In conjunction with the Israel-based Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace, AJC published a series of studies of the textbooks of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran, and the Palestinian Authority, to determine what attitudes toward the “other” and toward peace were conveyed. While the schoolbooks varied from country to country, all exalted jihad, expressed negative views of the Jews and the West, and for the most part, did not even show Israel on their maps. These studies have been widely circulated to governmental circles, the media, and diplomats.

September 11— The Shadow of Terrorism over the U.S.

The attack on America by suicidal Islamic jihadists on September 11, 2001, brought home to AJC and to all Americans the agonies of terrorism that Israel had been facing and the dilemmas posed by its response. AJC’s expertise in tracking international terrorism was called to the fore, and its Department of Middle East and International Terrorism reached out to national policymakers as well as to international counterterrorist experts. DMEIT issued a series of reports, beginning with an in-depth profile of Osama bin Laden, and including studies of Hamas, Hezbollah, and the ties between Al-Qaeda, Iran, and Hezbollah.

AJC encouraged the sharing of expertise between Israeli and American counterterrorism specialists. A month after 9/11, AJC brought fifteen high-ranking Israeli police officers to the American cities most impacted by the terrorist threat. As the officers stood at Ground Zero, they placed the insignia of the Israeli police force next to those of police groups from around the U.S. The Israeli insignia was the only one from abroad.

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The Battle for Ideas on Campus

The American venue that seemed most impacted by the conflict in the Middle East was the college campus, and many Jewish students who were supporters of Israel felt harassed—sometimes even physically—and intimidated during the escalation of the violence. Many AJC chapters reached out to local college students to prepare them with strategies for mobilizing support for Israel. AJC fellows and interns developed advocacy kits, including posters and advertisements that could be used in college papers, presenting a positive picture of Israeli society. AJC's Berlin office also organized a gathering of European Jewish students to discuss the challenges they faced.

On the high school level, AJC partnered with the Solomon Schechter High School of New York to develop a curriculum to familiarize students with the history and current realities of Israel. *IKAR*—standing for *Israel: Knowledge, Advocacy, and Responsibility*—included a teacher's guide, hand-outs, maps, posters, source documents, and a DVD with short film clips. It has been picked up in many schools.

As mentioned above, AJC recognized that the core problem of Israel's unfavorable presentation in academia could be traced to the dominance of Middle Eastern studies departments, often supported by funding from oil-rich Arab states, taught by hand-picked Arabists who railed against Israel. To help correct the imbalance, AJC in 2004 helped launch the Brandeis-AJC Summer Institute for Israel Studies, which each year takes twenty professors from across the country and prepares them to teach courses about Israel. Participants emerge equipped to present a fair and nuanced view of the Jewish state. As an offshoot of this program, AJC has launched the AJC-Brandeis Summer Seminars in the Berkshires, for lay leaders to deepen their knowledge of contemporary Israel.



Responding to Boycotts and Divestment Challenges

A different sort of academic challenge arose in 2007, when the British University and College Union endorsed in principle boycotting Israeli institutions of higher learning. The response from the U.S. was bracing: Lee Bollinger, the president of Columbia University, wrote a statement inviting the British schools to “add Columbia to its boycott list, for we do not intend to draw distinctions between our mission and that of the universities you are seeking to punish.” AJC called on other American university heads to follow Bollinger's lead, and soon some 300 college presidents signed on to his statement, which was published by AJC in the *New York Times*. The British union then backed down.

Efforts to isolate Israel and make it a pariah were not limited to academia. In the wake of the second intifada, churches, municipalities, and other groups pursued the idea of divesting from companies doing business with Israel or based in the disputed territories. Several Mainline Protestant churches—in particular, the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Anglican Consultative Council—considered divestment strategies. In 2004, the Presbyterian Church instructed its Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee to initiate a process of “phased selective divestment in multinational corporations operating in Israel.” AJC, through its chapters, reached out to local Presbyterian churches to try to persuade them that divestment was harmful to efforts for peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Three years of sustained dialogue at the local level paid off in 2007, when the Presbyterian General Assembly reversed its decision and endorsed “constructive investment in peace.”

The Brandeis-AJC Summer Institute for Israel Studies prepares professors from across the country to teach courses on modern Israel.

AJC efforts to reach out to Mainline Protestant groups have continued, most recently with the United Methodist Church, which is due to take up deliberations on divestment.

The Second Lebanon War

On July 12, 2007, a group of Hezbollah militants attacked Israeli soldiers who were routinely patrolling their side of the border. Of seven soldiers in two jeeps, three were killed, two wounded, and two taken captive into Lebanon. This act of aggression, which was accompanied by intensive shelling of Israeli villages, touched off the Second Lebanon War, and Israel soon found itself fighting on two fronts, against Hamas in the south and Hezbollah in the north, with Iran supplying the weaponry for both. In Gaza and in southern Lebanon the Israeli army faced deeply entrenched guerrilla forces, hiding in bunkers and shooting from civilian apartment buildings. The battle raged for thirty-three days, and while the Israeli army had the upper hand, the outcome, after a UN-brokered ceasefire took hold, was unclear, as Hezbollah was quickly rearmed by Iran.

In July, an AJC delegation of forty visited the two fronts of the war, Sderot and Haifa—the first American Jewish solidarity group to come during the fighting. While visiting Haifa, the group experienced firsthand the rocket attacks and the descent into air-raid shelters. While waiting to donate blood at Haifa's

Rambam Hospital, after visiting wounded soldiers, AJC executive director David Harris used his BlackBerry to initiate a donation campaign. Well over two million dollars poured into AJC's Israel Solidarity Campaign, which quickly disbursed funds to outfit solidarity vans for the embattled north, bringing 500 first-aid kits, baby supplies, and children's toys to families in shelters. The funds raised also went to purchase two coronary care ambulances for Magen David Adom.

In September 2007 another AJC mission brought 120 AJC members as well as American Christian leaders and some international Jewish communal leaders to Israel. There they visited the Haifa hospital where many of the wounded were being treated, met with the parents of the kidnapped Israeli soldiers, and visited an Air Force base in the south.

Responding to the Iranian Challenge

Even as the Lebanon War wound down, the instigating party, Iran, kept ratcheting up its vicious anti-Israel rhetoric and pursuing its aspiration to become a nuclear power. AJC protested to the UN when Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad used exterminatory language, "The main solution is for the elimination of the Zionist regime." And AJC used all its diplomatic tools to persuade other nations to apply economic sanctions to Iran and to use other levers such as freezing assets and banning travel to bring Tehran around. AJC chapters reached out the local governments calling on them to divest from companies doing active business in Iran.

On the southern border of Israel, particularly in the town of Sderot, the missiles kept coming—for seven years, with much greater intensity and frequency after the ascension to power of Hamas. AJC sent numerous solidarity delegations to Sderot and raised money for a resiliency center, to offer psychological services to the beleaguered residents. AJC also provided for the construction of an emergency management center in the nearby Sha'ar HaNegev regional hub, the target of many Qassam attacks, and a steadfast presence in this stricken area.



AJC Executive Director David A. Harris visits the wounded in Rambam Hospital in Haifa during the Second Lebanon War.

Summary

Time and time again, Israeli leaders have acknowledged AJC's consistent backing of Israel's quest for peace, security, and normalization. Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told AJC's Board of Governors visiting Israel in March 2008, "I learned during the last two years what a great and important role you have. We are working together in the most concrete and effective way."

This shared agenda has many facets: public opinion campaigns, diplomacy, and simply marching together. In recent years, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs has adapted several AJC publications that convey Israel's quest for peace, and have translated them into Swedish, Portuguese, and other languages, for dissemination through Israeli embassies worldwide.

As for marching, AJC has for the past two years expressed its pride in Israel by preparing a float and sending a delegation to the annual Salute to Israel Parade down Fifth Avenue in New York. At the Annual Meeting gala dinners, the two flags fly and the two anthems are sung—a powerful message to all in attendance, who usually include world leaders as well as Washington's diplomatic corps. For the Israelis present—which includes future leaders and commanders of the IDF—this leaves an indelible impression on their souls.

AJC's efforts to bolster ties between Americans—both Jewish and non-Jewish—and Israelis have accomplished much. Through its Israel office, the Koppelman Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations, and Project Interchange, thousands of Israelis have a more sophisticated understanding of the dynamism of American and American Jewish life, and, similarly, thousands of well-placed Americans have a most realistic grasp of Israel's accomplishments and problems. Perhaps that is why former Under Secretary of State Stuart Eizenstat stated, "No American Jewish organization has done more to support Israel since its historic rebirth than the American Jewish Committee."



There is today no Jewish organization anywhere in the world, outside Israel, that has such extensive, multifaceted programs designed to enhance Israel's diplomatic and political standing in this country, at the UN, in capitals around the globe—from Africa to Asia, from Europe to Latin America, and throughout the Arab world. No organization has more extensive ties with religious, ethnic, and civic groups, connections that have permitted enhanced understanding of Israel. No other organization can deploy the array of tools that AJC has at its disposal to help Israel's standing worldwide: diplomacy, coalition-building, advocacy, research, publications, polling, and media outreach.

As the State of Israel enters its seventh decade, and AJC enters its second century, the bond between the two is intimate and enduring. And it is sure to grow even stronger in the years ahead.

2008
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David Ben-Gurion meets AJC President Jacob Blaustein to clarify Israel-Diaspora Jewry roles.



Prime Minister Golda Meir greets AJC President Elmer Winter and his wife, Nanette.



AJC leaders (from left) Elmer Winter, Robert Rifkind, Rabbi Ron Kronish, Lawrence Thorpe, Alfred Moses, and Bruce Ramer present an AJC ad to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

AJC Leaders Meet Israeli Leaders



President E. Robert Goodkind shares a podium with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.



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