

Statement on behalf of
Bereaved Families for Peace and Justice
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For immediate release

Dear Secretary of State Kerry:

You have encouraged the government of Israel to free more than a hundred convicted terrorists, almost all of them killers, starting this week. We, the undersigned, are Israelis who lost loved ones to actions like those for which the terrorists were convicted and sentenced. The decision to free them is a tragic mistake. **Justice and good sense say it should be reversed.**

The terrorists, guilty of acts of savagery, are emerging into freedom proud and erect. Instead of telling them to go quietly home to make peaceful lives while thanking their lucky stars, their leaders, principally the Palestinian Authority of Mahmoud Abbas, exalts them as heroes. It [asks the world's nations to do the same](#). The spilled blood of innocent Jewish and Arab civilians is offered to the Arab street as proof of valor and courage. This is a sick perversion of reality.

Since the deal was first proposed, we have wondered what could have induced Israel's political leaders to agree. What caused the author of "*Fighting Terrorism: How Democracies Can Defeat Domestic and International Terrorists*", a best selling book by Binyamin Netanyahu that tells governments they will win only by refusing to give in to the terrorists, to betray the core ideas that are said to have guided his political career?

The arguments **against** releasing terrorists are many. In terms of **security**, terrorists often go back to terror. This is especially so when their society proclaims their freedom as vindication for their deeds, as the Abbas PA is doing today. Their freedom and the celebrations that attend it also serve as a form of incitement to future terror, as all who wish harm on Israel observe that the Jewish state is willing to release the murderers of its children for a few moments of positive media coverage. Some 180 Israelis have been murdered by terrorists who were released in previous rounds of "goodwill" gestures. Then there is the **law**. If courts pronounce sentence on murderers, and the politicians release them long before those sentences have been served, the judicial system is undermined. Since law and justice are at the heart of every democratic society, democracy is endangered. And there is an **educational** message – a sickening one. British television's Channel 4 screened a documentary some years ago called "*Inside the mind of a suicide bomber*". Filmed in an Israeli prison, it shows interviews with failed bombers and those who planned the massacres. The cold, frank answers of the killers reinforce our belief that it is madness to allow them back in the villages and on the roads.

One of them is Majdi Amro, sentenced to 17 life terms for his part in a Haifa bus bombing that ended the lives of seventeen people, most of them high school students. He is the murderer of the teenage children of several signatories to this letter. Amro says to the camera: "**I am not worried! I will not be in jail for long. I will be out shortly and will go back to killing Jews.**" And indeed he walked free two years ago, despite those multiple life terms. A decision by a previous Netanyahu government, calculated to secure the freedom of Gilad Shalit, an Israeli hostage of the Hamas terrorists, ensured that.

Another film produced inside a prison shows another convicted Palestinian Arab terrorist, Ahlam Tamimi, sentenced to 16 life terms for murder and terrorism, saying: **"I'm not sorry for what I did. We'll become free from the occupation and then I will be free from prison."** When it was her turn to be freed in that same Shalit deal, she said about the people she killed: **"I had hoped for a larger toll."** She murdered the daughters of signatories to this letter too. From her home in Jordan, she is now a television celebrity throughout the Arabic-speaking world, the object of open adulation. Her message is: *the killings were justified, punishment in Israeli prisons is temporary and bearable, terrorism works.*

The Israeli politicians of two years ago warned that any return to terror by those released would result in immediate arrest, re-imprisonment, enforced completion of the original sentence and so on. They are saying it this week too. But Tamimi's example proves that such words are empty.

Something else about releasing terrorists: the willingness to make huge efforts to get them out of Israeli prisons tells us much about how Arab society sees them, and the way they symbolize victory in the fight with Israel. A string of prison breaks attributed to Al Qaeda in the last month freed hundreds of jailed terrorists across the Islamic world, showing how imprisoned terrorists are an invaluable resource. Freeing them justifies serious effort. Yet Israel is handing them over with nothing tangible in return.

The attempt to rescue a kidnapped Israeli serviceman, Nachshon Waxman, in 1994 resulted in the deaths of the hostage and of the commander of the IDF rescue squad. Since then, the military option appears to have been removed from the table. Israelis have been told that handing over more and more imprisoned terrorists is **the only remaining alternative**. An Israel Today poll asked whether they agreed but the respondents showed that they see through the falseness of the argument. Nine to one, they were against setting more Palestinian killers free. When the government's decision was taken a few days later, the clear opposition of the people was ignored.

We are left with many questions and few answers. The deep pain within us expresses not only our private grief but the expectation of more unbearable losses in the future that will threaten our society and grimly enlarge the ranks of those like us – families who have lost our children, parents, aunts, uncles, grandmothers and grandfathers to Palestinian murderers.

We are turning to the government of the United States whose leaders have been instrumental in extracting from Israel a painful, damaging decision that – even now, before it is fully carried out – is [already being cheapened by Arab voices](#).

We say to you, as US Secretary of State, and to your colleagues in the Obama administration: you will not find ordinary citizens anywhere, and certainly not in Israel, who are **more convinced of the need for painful compromise and of bilateral concessions in the pursuit of peace than we are**. We have paid an unbearably high price for this generations-long conflict. We know it must end. But the process of making it end **cannot be built on a foundation of glorifying the bombers of restaurants and of buses** and those who sent them. To think otherwise is to admit a fatal flaw to the plan to bring an end to the hatred.

Meet with us. Let us explain why **being complicit in turning the killers of our children and parents into heroes and 'freedom fighters' must not be part of any policy befitting a great nation and moral exemplar like the United States**. It is not too late. We ask you to make time to meet with a small group of us when you come back to this area in the coming days. We urge you to re-connect with the human dimension of the process you have started.

Signed on behalf of **Bereaved Parents for Peace and Justice** (alphabetical by surname)

Moshe	Bartov	Son of Frida (a Holocaust survivor) and Alter Britvitz, murdered by terrorists
Cyril	Feinberg	Father of Ian (30), murdered by terrorists
Estelle	Feinberg	Mother of Ian (30), murdered by terrorists
Estie	Firstater	Mother of Smadar (16), murdered by terrorists
Ron	Kehrmann	Father of Tal (18), murdered by terrorists
Doron	Menchel	Father of Danielle (22), murdered by terrorists
Hagit	Mendellevich	Mother of Yuval (13), murdered by terrorists
Yossi	Mendellevich	Father of Yuval (13), murdered by terrorists
Dr Gila	Molcho	Sister of Ian (30), murdered by terrorists
Shula	Oved	Mother of Be'eri (21), murdered by terrorists
Zamir	Oved	Father of Be'eri (21), murdered by terrorists
Avivah	Raziel	Mother of Michal (16), murdered by terrorists
Arnold	Roth	Father of Malki (15), murdered by terrorists
Frimet	Roth	Mother of Malki (15), murdered by terrorists
Galit	Shtayer	Daughter of Ruth and Zeev Almog, sister of Moshik, aunt of Tomer, mother of Asaf, all murdered by terrorists
Ofer	Shtayer	Son-in-law of Ruth and Zeev Almog, brother-in-law of Moshik, uncle of Tomer, father of Asaf, all murdered by terrorists
Leah	Zur	Mother of Asaf (17), murdered by terrorists
Yossi	Zur	Father of Asaf (17), murdered by terrorists