

The “Citizens’ Letter” to the Government of Israel, May 2008

Following the historic visit of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to Israel, Prime Minister Begin displayed hesitation regarding compromises over territory and Jewish settlements. In the spring of 1978, 348 reserve officers and soldiers wrote a letter to the prime minister that came to be known as “The Officers’ Letter” (and led to the creation of Peace Now). The letter called upon the prime minister **to choose peace over territory and settlements**. Thirty years later, in the spring of 2008, once again, we call upon the government **to choose peace over territory and settlements**. The Officers’ Letter of 1978,¹ with very minor changes,² has become The Citizens’ Letter of 2008.

The undersigned demand of the Government of Israel:

TO STOP ALL BUILDING IN SETTLEMENTS AND EAST JERUSALEM, TO DISBAND ALL THE ILLEGAL OUTPOSTS.

[To Prime Minister Begin] *To the Government of Israel*

This letter is sent to you by Israeli citizens, who also serve as soldiers and officers in the reserves, *or who have served, for the most part*. We do not address the following words to you with an easy heart. However, at this time, when *once again* new [horizons] *windows of opportunity* for peace and cooperation in the area are presented to Israel, we consider it an obligation to appeal to you — to avoid steps liable to bring misfortune to our people and our country.

We write with a deep sense of alarm. A government that prefers the existence of Israel within borders determined by [Greater Israel] *the settlements*, rather than an Israel existing in peace through good neighborly relations, arouses serious doubts amongst us. A government that prefers settlements beyond the Green Line to terminating the historic conflict and establishing normal relations with the countries in our region raises serious doubts about the justice of our cause.

The government policy of perpetuating its rule over [a million Arabs] *millions of Palestinians* could harm the Jewish-democratic character of the state, and make it difficult for us to identify with the path of the State of Israel. Mindful of Israel’s security needs and the difficulties on the road to peace, we nevertheless consider that true security can be achieved only through the achievement of peace. The strength of the Israel Defense Forces lies in the identification of its citizen-soldiers with Israel’s path.

We call upon you to choose the path of peace and, thereby, strengthen our belief in our cause.

348 Signatures

¹ Set in square brackets.

² Set in italics.