

# Standing Together's Vision

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**The State of Israel has completely changed since October 7th.** After many long years of right-wing rule that opposed peace, denied the existence of the problem, and tried to “manage” the occupation – reality blew up in our faces. Under the cover of war, the right-wing government established a new and dangerous regime, that sows destruction and death outside Israel and within it, attacks every expression of democracy and equality, and blatantly promises us eternal war, death, occupation, and hatred: a future that holds no place for most of us.

**Now we stand at a historic crossroads and must choose between two opposing paths: between the Kahanists' path of a forever war or the path of reconciliation and peace.** The choice has never been sharper nor more fateful for Israelis, Palestinians, and the entire Middle East. But to fix the destruction wrought by the Right, we must understand: **it is neither possible nor desirable to go back.** Yes, **there are politicians who suggest we need not choose** but rather can blindly continue as if nothing has happened, along the same path that led to Hamas's October 7th massacre and the terrible war that followed – ignoring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ignoring the internal ills of Israeli society. **But we all experienced the terrible consequences of that willful ignorance,** and we cannot let ourselves be tempted to return to it; from this crisis we desperately need a deep and true repair. It will not be easy, but it is necessary.

**We have all experienced the path on which the Kahanist Right has led us:** the path of **forever war, expulsion, destruction without end,** that will continue to impose misery and suffering on millions of people. This is the path of deepening occupation in Gaza and the West Bank; of oppression of and discrimination against Arab citizens of Israel and Jews who oppose the government; of Israel's isolation from the world, extreme nationalism and social constriction; and of the collapse of solidarity within our society. If we continue on this path, everything we value will be sacrificed for this eternal war: education, healthcare, arts, human lives, and economic wellbeing – the future of all of us. That would be the path of existential fear, shame for what this land has become, hopelessness, and never-ending dread.

**The alternative path is to build a future that we want to live in:** a future of peace and security, historic reconciliation, and shared destiny. A future of building a state that serves us all, that we'll be proud of, and that we'll be able to feel a true part of. A

state that lives in a just peace alongside an independent Palestinian state, without occupation; a state based on civil and national equality, without discrimination or institutional racism; a state that is integrated into a region in which we all can live with freedom, equality, and independence; and in which Israelis and Palestinians can rebuild together and climb out of the abyss into which we have fallen. **Not only will the cities of the Gaza strip need to be rebuilt, but also Israel,** into a state that ensures equality, that serves the interests of all, that provides a place for everyone and doesn't divide us, and whose society is one of solidarity, mutual responsibility, and care. A state that advances social and environmental justice, whose economy belongs to all of us, that ensures that we can all thrive, without constant anxiety, without oppression or exploitation. A truly democratic country, which each and every one of us can claim as their home, because this is our shared home.

**The Kahanists successfully advanced their vision because they had one:** They knew how to articulate the future of their dreams, and of our nightmares, and for years they never stopped – even for an instant – working to realize it. **In order to beat them, we must also clearly articulate our dreams,** and organize and fight to make them real. We can't only organize in opposition and say what we don't want – rather we must present to the public in Israel a convincing alternative. If we don't do this – no one will do it for us, and we'll be left only fighting reactive struggles.

In the coming pages we propose a future that responds to the hopes and fears of the people who live here. This document isn't a detailed work plan written by experts, detailing exactly how we'll get there step-by-step. Those documents will need to be written in the future. This also isn't a utopian dream, nor is it meant to be the last word on what we hope to achieve. Rather, this document is meant to outline an achievable future for our land.

**It will not happen in one day:** It takes time for wounds to heal, and a change as significant as this one requires great effort. But to imagine how this land can look if we choose life is the first and necessary step in building this future: to imagine how it will look if it is designed to serve us—the majority, the people who live here, and want to continue to live, and not give up on this land.

### **A Future of Peace and Historic Reconciliation**

**Peace that will ensure security for all:** After the atrocities we experienced, our most pressing need is to free ourselves from fear. To live without fear in our shared homeland. To live without the never-ending anticipation of the next round of war; not to have to move apartments because ours doesn't have a bomb shelter, or to despair when we realize it's not in our budget; not to feel guilty because our children learn how to say “missile alarm” before they can say the word “story”; to stop seeing

more and more friends and loved ones leave this land, because they're afraid and have no hope. This is the most basic right which we all deserve, Jews and Arabs: peace that will ensure us the comfort and protection that people feel when they are at home. A peace in which a Jewish mother won't spend her son's entire childhood fearing the day he will turn 18 and will have to be drafted into the military, and where a girl in Gaza won't be frightened every time she hears a plane fly overhead. This means an end to the occupation and military control over millions of Palestinians, historic reconciliation, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, that will be achieved through equal negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian leadership, and a future where weapons aren't in the hands of Hamas, settler militias, or organized criminal groups, but only in the hands of the legitimate security forces of both states.

**A peace of two states in a shared homeland:** Two peoples live in this land – their homeland – and they both love it and are connected to it. Both peoples' roots reach deep here, and neither one is going anywhere. We are partners on this land, we can only thrive here together, and we've already learned that tall fences don't create good neighbors. But we also don't want to erase our identities: neither the Jewish-Israeli identity nor the Arab-Palestinian identity. The peace that we desire will grant both peoples freedom, equality, mutual recognition, and independence, and thus make possible a true partnership that is not based on force and supremacy. The inhabitants of this land have experienced injustice and intergenerational trauma that will not heal overnight, and therefore shared recognition and healing of past wrongdoings are necessary in order to overcome the lack of trust in our societies, create a sense of security, and build the foundation for a shared future. Only in this way can we collectively imagine the common good for all of us, and move toward it together. What does this mean in practice? To establish two independent democratic states based on UN resolutions, as a result of negotiations and based on understandings and agreements that will be accepted by both peoples, who will share certain agreed-upon (confederative) joint institutions, an undivided Jerusalem that will be the capital of both states, protection of the freedom of religion at the holy sites of all religions, return of the majority of the settlers to Israel, a just and agreed upon solution for Palestinian refugees, and open borders that allow Jews to pray at the Cave of the Patriarchs and Joseph's Tomb, and to hike the Kelt Valley, and that also allows Palestinians to swim at Tel Aviv's beaches or to visit the villages from which their grandparents were expelled in 1948.

**A peace of connection and not of division:** the peace that we are dreaming of between Israel, Palestine, and the Arab world is not a peace based on division – but rather of connection between the two peoples and the greater Middle East. It is a peace where our partners in business, science, sports, and art are located just across the border. A peace where we will dance in Beirut and travel to Nablus and Hebron,

just as Lebanese, Syrians, and Palestinians will eat *sabich* in Ramat Gan and pray in Nazareth and Jerusalem. We know that the sense of belonging to and the love of the two peoples for this land doesn't end at the border-to-be, and we want a peace that allows freedom of movement between Israel and Palestine, where our ears will be used to hearing Arabic and Hebrew everywhere, and where both societies are habituated not to hate.

**A peace of a democratic and equal Israel – including for the Palestinian citizens:**

The peace between the state of Israel and the state of Palestine will not be one where the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel fall between the cracks, but rather one that recognizes the historic wrongdoing and the decades-long discrimination, and will put an end to the reality where an Arab-Palestinian citizen of Israel is a citizen of a state which is at war with his or her own people. Rather, we propose that alongside the independent Palestinian state, we will work to establish a new Israel, that is democratic and equal, in which everyone feels at home, enjoys civil and national equality and its benefits. In such a state there will be no racist Nation-State Law, no discriminatory citizenship laws, both Hebrew and Arabic will be official languages taught in every school, and the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel will live in their homeland without any conditions, discrimination, or denial of rights.

**A peace that will enable all of us to engage in civic life:** When this never-ending war and occupation will come to an end, we will be able to win our struggle to build a civic society rather than a military one. This won't happen in just one day – but it is important to imagine it: a public agenda and politics that are focused on solving everyday problems, such as housing, education, public transportation, and healthcare – the same problems that are shared amongst us all; a state that invests our taxes in finding solutions to such problems, instead of in more wars that cost billions; and leaders who aren't generals, but rather women and men who come from diverse backgrounds and life experiences, such as teachers, social activists, and social workers. A society in which weapons are not present everywhere, where the army isn't present in schools, and problems aren't solved through violence. A state that needs far fewer soldiers, and a society where one's contributions aren't judged by one's military service, and where questions around mandatory military service are not a source of huge controversy. A life of healthy routines – not endless emergencies.

**A Future of Social Justice**

**Life without fear and anxiety:** The end of this war means the end of many of our fears – but not all of them. A state that works for us is a state that addresses our fears: the fear of what will happen to us when we can no longer work - if we are fired, get sick, or when we get old. The fear of what will happen to our children and our

families and whether they live in security. The fear of where we'll live when we finish our lease and our rent goes up. The fear of what we'll do when next month's bills come. We deserve to live in a state that offers us (whether we are salaried employees, freelancers, gig workers, or unemployed) a safety net that ensures our peace of mind.

**A state that takes care of our needs:** We want not only freedom from fear and anxiety but also to thrive, and for that we need a state that works for us and sees us and our needs. To thrive we all need: healthcare that we can depend on (and not only in the geographic center); quality kindergartens that allow parents to work without sacrificing their children's wellbeing; schools that aren't just babysitters; free university and college education – to allow all young people to develop and pursue whatever path they choose; high-quality public transportation that allows us to thrive even without a private car; affordable housing (for example, through long-term rent control) and widespread public housing; healthy and high-quality food; and solutions for the elderly that will ensure their respectful care, at the expense of the state, even for those who because of their advanced age need personal assistance.

These are basic needs – not luxuries – and they must be available to everyone on an equal basis. Only in this way can we all receive equal opportunities to contribute and to thrive. Only in this way can we create the breathing space that will allow us to access arts and culture and to live a life of enjoyment. To this end, we must build a state that works for everyone, and that ensures we won't lack professional doctors and teachers, because it provides them training and offers all public service workers dignified compensation and working conditions.

**Fair compensation and taxation:** To enable all this, we will need fair compensation and taxation. We want a state where even the minimum wage allows us to live with respect, where workers feel proud of their professions and knowledge, where they don't feel punished every time they receive their paychecks. A country in which the tax on labor will not be higher than the tax on capital gains, where natural resources and gas are not plundered by billionaires, and tycoons are required to give back to the society in which they became wealthy, to ensure that they not only take from us and give to themselves, but also that we take from them and give to us all. Fair taxation of the rich, alongside a reduction in military expenditure, are necessary so that we can all thrive.

**To feel ownership over our labor – but not to live for it:** Work can be difficult, but the right policies can help. The vast majority of us sell our best hours to our place of work. Therefore, for us to thrive the workplace must feel like it belongs to us, sees our interests and needs as workers and takes them into account. There are places in the world like this, and there are different ways to get there. And they are all correct: inclusion of workers' representatives in management decisions in companies (as in

Germany), laws that help workers' organizations and provides them with effective tools to improve their wages and work conditions (as in the Scandinavian countries), abolition of contract labor, encouragement of worker-owned companies, and measures to help workers obtain shares in the company they work for. But even when the work feels like it's ours, our lives aren't all about work. In order to thrive we need sufficient paid time off, long paternity leave for parents of all genders that will allow them to feel like parents, protections from greedy employers who demand that we be available at all hours, and public investment in culture and leisure.

### **A Future of Equality**

**A state where everyone benefits from what it has to offer:** The new state that we will build here will work for us – its citizens – and will allow all of us to feel ownership. For this to happen, it must be truly equal. This means that in Rahat and Kiryat Shmona children will receive education of no lesser quality and be budgeted no less than in Herzliya and Tel Aviv, and that their grandparents will also receive healthcare that is just as good. It means that residents of Kfar Qara, like those in Givataim, won't be afraid to walk their own streets. It means that the police will ensure protection from crime, and no teenager will feel that organized crime is their only way to succeed. It means that land and building permits will be distributed equitably, including to Arabs. It means that the issue of “unrecognized” Arab villages will be a thing of the past because they will all receive governmental recognition, and the proceeds from municipal property taxes will likewise be redistributed equitably, including to the Development Towns. It means that buses will allow us to live without a private car even in the geographic periphery, and that there will be train stations also in Arab cities and towns. It means that the government's decisions will take into account the diverse needs of all, including people like us, and will not harm future generations. Since the road is long, until we achieve our goal of building a state that serves its citizens, we'll use metrics for closing geographic, national, ethnic and gender-based divisions to measure our success and according to them, we will evaluate policies in every area.

**Partnership and solidarity in place of division:** Most people imagine Israel as a space divided between “opposing tribes”: Jews and Arabs, secular, religious and ultra-orthodox people, those who were born here and those who immigrated or fled from abroad. Thus, cities and neighborhoods are seen as battlegrounds over control. There is nothing wrong with different and unique communities, but what we lack alongside them is public spaces that belong to all of us and also a feeling of solidarity and community that unites us all. In the new country that we will build here, we will no longer allow others to incite us against each other and divide us. This means building cities and neighborhoods that are not Jewish or Arab, secular or religious, but rather are diverse, that enable living together with mutual respect. This means

the establishment of more thriving bilingual schools. It means the end of “acceptance committees” [that decide who can live in certain communities] and fenced towns surrounded by yellow gates. Because as history has taught us, separate is not equal. Existing separation is rooted in fears, and some of these fears are based on reality: for example, the fear that when there isn’t equality in education and policing, certain communities become places in which crime thrives. However, the solution is not more separation, but rather more equality.

**Gender and sexual equality:** An equal society is one in which our gender and sexuality do not affect the opportunities and risks we experience, and do not prevent any person from self-fulfillment. Such a society fights sexual and gender-based violence, gender inequality in wages, prejudices, and manifestations of discrimination in all areas of life.

**Secular-religious diversity, not a religious war:** A society composed of people of different religions and of secular and religious people, can be an arena for tensions and struggles over the organization of public space and over the relations between the various religious communities and the institutions of the state. The solution to these tensions should be based on recognition of individual freedoms (including the right to civil marriage and divorce) and of the right of diverse communities to live their lives according to their faith or religious commandments, without coercion, religious imposition, or forced secularization, and without preference for one religious current over another. Building a democratic and egalitarian society that lives in peace with neighboring countries will help build solidarity, weaken divisive politicians who ignite unnecessary conflicts, and in the long term reduce the need for soldiers from all groups in Israeli society.

**A country where people like us are everywhere:** In an equal country, children dare to dream. For this to happen, we all need to get used to seeing people like us and people different from us – men and women, Jews and Arabs, Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, immigrants from the former Soviet Union and immigrants from Ethiopia, people from the Negev/Naqab, the Triangle, and the Galilee, straight and LGBTQ+ – everywhere, and especially in places of power: in the leadership of the state, in the management ranks of major companies, among the judges in the courts, and in university faculties. Equality means that every girl sees with her own eyes that she can go anywhere.

**A place for all our identities:** Each and every one of us has more than one identity: we have nationality; religion and level of observance; gender identity, sexual orientation, and generational identity; lifestyle; and sometimes a disability. Because of this, almost all of us know what it feels like to experience shame or rejection

because of elements of our identity. An egalitarian society tries to fix this: to allow all of us to feel recognition and pride in our identities. This means education for equality and partnership, and giving expression to the identities, languages, and histories of the diverse groups, in the education system and through investment in culture.

**Equality in the ability to influence:** A real democracy is one in which citizens not only go to vote once every four years, but are equal participants in shaping the rules, laws, and institutions that govern their lives. In simple terms, policies need to take us into account and allow us to have influence on an ongoing basis. This, of course, means democratic freedoms such as freedom of expression and the freedom to protest, but it means much more: protecting democracy from the corrupt influence of wealth on the government, the participation of the public in planning processes that will affect their lives, democratization in local government, enabling the public to initiate referendums, mechanisms that will prevent the majority from trampling the minority in decision-making processes and will ensure representation for groups whose voices are not heard, decentralization of decision-making (from the Ministry of Education to the schools, from central to local government), involving workers in decision-making in large businesses, involving children in decision-making in their schools, democratizing labor unions so that decision-making is in the hands of the workers, and so forth.

### **A Future of Environmental Justice**

**Fighting the climate crisis is fighting for equality:** We need a completely new approach to dealing with the climate crisis, one that understands that it is not just about “the environment.” The climate crisis will have (and already has) an impact on our daily lives, our jobs, our security, our ability to be outside as weather becomes more extreme, our food, our public systems, and more. As always, the most vulnerable are the first to be harmed by the climate disaster: outdoor workers, disabled people or those who struggle with illness, children, and the elderly. When the political system in Israel ignores the climate crisis, it is both ignoring our problems and willfully ignoring actions that will improve our lives. We propose a different path forward – one that seeks to do more than just survive the climate crisis. We see that this crisis can be turned into an opportunity that will ensure better lives for all of us. The key lies in the understanding that environmental issues are also social and economic issues.

To say that the climate crisis is also a social and economic crisis is to say it is also political. This crisis has not come about by some accident, some twist of fate. It was chosen. Politicians around the world consistently chose the profits of the wealthy over the interests of the majority. The time has come for a different way. This means that instead of privatization - we will start investing in our public systems so they will be resilient and strong. Instead of distributing natural resources to whoever pays

more - we will return them to public hands. Instead of surrendering to private car importers - we will invest in green public transportation. Instead of food industries that abuse animals and pollute the environment - we will build a sustainable food system that ensures healthy and accessible food for everyone, while supporting farmers and local production. Instead of letting owners of polluting industries like Bazan hold workers hostage so as not to close the plant - we will both close the plant and ensure a good and worthy job for every one of its employees.

**The sun is for all of us:** Israel must lead the transition to renewable energy, and with the powerful sunlight that shines here it's more than possible. We must not, however, let tycoons take over this sector as they have in so many other realms, and they must not be allowed to control our electricity prices. We will ensure a rapid transition to renewable energy, and make sure it remains in state and community ownership, to ensure that the profits go to us – not the wealthy big business owners. Instead of investing in gas and oil systems that pollute our air, water, and soil, we will place solar panels atop public buildings, parking lots, and private homes. We will also build a decentralized, safe, and inexpensive electricity grid - from which no one will ever be forced to disconnect.

**Good cities preserve open spaces:** If we build cities with good infrastructure, with housing, commerce, employment and education in proximity to one another, with public transportation, small businesses and plenty of shade, trees and affordable housing - more people will be able to live in cities, get rid of private cars, and thus both preserve open spaces and get rid of traffic jams. Over 90% of Israel's citizens live in cities – the time has come for our cities to be as good and pleasant as they can be.

**Climate is a bridge to peace:** The entire Middle East is affected by the climate crisis, and the crisis does not recognize borders. Therefore, we cannot deal with the crisis only within Israel's borders and hope for the best. Dealing with the climate crisis not only requires Israeli–Palestinian peace and peace between Israel and all its neighbours - it can also be the bridge on which we will walk toward a future of peace: joint projects for nature conservation in Israel and Palestine, with shared national parks where we can all hike; a joint effort to preserve groundwater on the coast and in the mountains for all of us, where Israeli and Palestinian engineers will work together; initiatives to install solar panels throughout the Middle East that will supply electricity to all countries, regenerative agriculture, and shared water desalination. All these and more will enable building a home here that is safe from the climate crisis, a home of cooperation, a vision for the future, and good neighborly relationships.

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## **Conclusion**

Taking the steps proposed in this document requires a broad, inclusive, and democratic struggle, one in which more and more people take part in diverse arenas to generate public support for the ideas proposed here, and to build political power around them.

This document is another layer, an additional level built upon the Theory of Change document of Standing Together, which opens with the words:

“Fundamental political and social change in Israel is possible – and we will accomplish it. It is attainable because the majority of people living here hold a genuine interest in an equal and just society, a society that serves all of us, and a government whose policies are radically different from the current regime that only serves occupation and wealth.”

We act and will continue to act in the spirit of this optimistic statement, and toward the vision detailed in the Theory of Change:

“Socialism, democracy, solidarity, equality, justice, an end to the occupation, peace, and the establishment of a government that works for the good of all those who live here.”

The Theory of Change concludes with words that also summarize the direction proposed in this document:

“The task that Standing Together has chosen to tackle is a revolutionary one: We strive to create profound change within Israeli society, the Israeli economy and Israeli politics. This is not a simple task, but we are inspired by our faith in people: their open minds, their genuine intentions, and their hearts filled with compassion and empathy. We love the people who live here. We are a part of them and we insist on fighting with and for them. Through joint solidarity and struggle, we will succeed.”