



# China Jumps to Save Hamas

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*Despite growing Chinese investment in Israel's economy, China has clearly demonstrated that its interest in Israel is purely instrumental and subordinate to its global ambitions of supplanting the United States on the world stage. Since October 7, China has calculated it can better advance that strategic agenda by siding with Hamas and Iran. Thus, Beijing has steadfastly opposed Israel's legitimate and necessary efforts to destroy Hamas, repeatedly blamed Israel for the ensuing war, and attempted to legitimize Hamas by meeting with its representatives.*

*As the war in Gaza continues, the United States should work to contrast itself with China's fair-weather friendship toward Israel by firmly supporting Israel's military efforts to destroy Hamas. When the conflict winds down, however, Israel will need to come to terms with China's pernicious ambitions and the risks of continuing to do business with Beijing.*

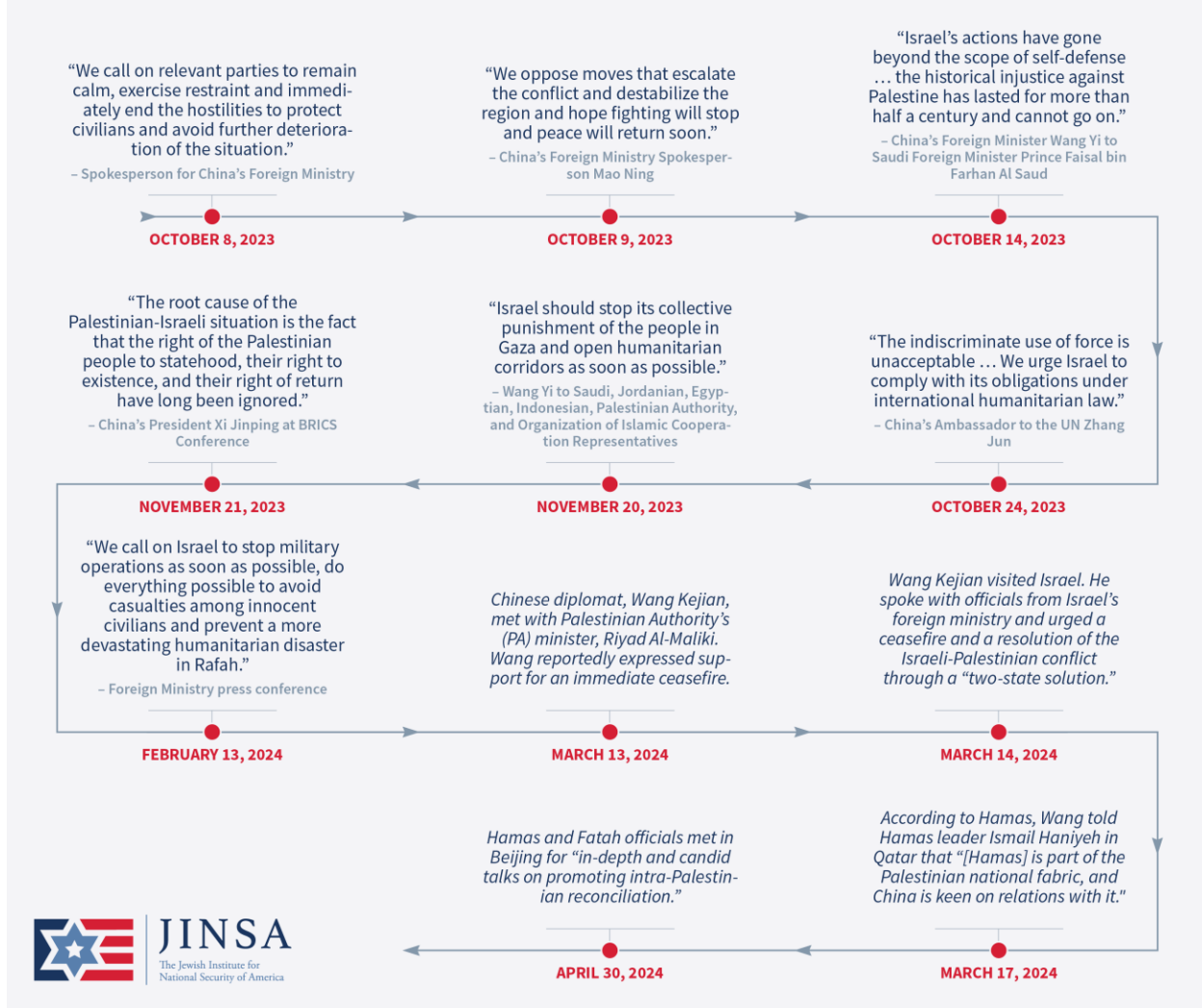
## What Happened?

- On May 30, during the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum in Beijing, China's President Xi Jinping said that "war [between Israel and Hamas] cannot continue indefinitely, justice cannot be permanently absent and a 'two-state solution' should be firmly upheld," as reported by [Reuters](#).

## Why Is It Important?

- Xi's casting of Israel's war as unjust in front of Arab leaders is just the most recent example of Chinese statements and positions, going back to the days immediately following the October 7 attack, that are effectively supportive of Hamas and critical of Israel. Despite having [invested substantially](#) in Israeli infrastructure and technology sectors, Beijing has effectively sided with Hamas and Iran in this conflict. This suggests that weakening the power of the United States—by contributing to the defeat of its close partner, Israel, and supporting the anti-American, Iran-led regional coalition—ultimately serves Chinese global interests better than building closer economic ties with Israel.
- Since October 7, China has attempted to undermine Israel's efforts to destroy Hamas by expressing opposition to Israel's military campaign, blaming Israel for the war, and legitimizing Hamas by meeting with its officials.
  - » China has opposed Israel's military campaign by urging Israel to stand down as early as October 8 and by [supporting several UNSC resolutions](#) calling for a ceasefire.
    - China's Foreign Ministry's [insistence](#) on October 8 that the "relevant parties" "exercise restraint and immediately end the hostilities" underscores Beijing's sense of urgency to frustrate Israel's operations.

# Sample of Quotes and Diplomatic Initiatives From China Addressing the Israel-Hamas war Since October 7:



- China supported a UNSC [resolution](#) calling for efforts to achieve a ceasefire that was proposed on October 18, just 11 days after Hamas’s brutal massacre in Israel, providing yet more evidence that unlike the United States, Beijing sought to quickly quash military action to destroy Hamas’s military and governance capabilities in Gaza—a paramount U.S. and Israeli interest.
- » Beijing has blamed Israel for starting the war in statements such as President Xi’s November 21 [claim](#) that “the root cause of the Palestinian-Israeli situation is the fact that the right of the Palestinian people to statehood, their right to existence, and their right of return have long been ignored.”
- » Chinese leaders have [met](#) with Hamas officials, [including](#) the group’s leader Ismail Haniyeh, on at least two occasions.
- Observers have also noted an increase in antisemitism online in China after Hamas’s October 7 massacre, and, considering the Chinese Communist Party’s tight control over online

activity within China, this suggests that Beijing views the promulgation of antisemitic discourse among its populace as valuable in sustaining an anti-Israel, anti-American geopolitical outlook.

- » During a January 22 speech to the American Bar Association, the State Department's deputy special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism, Aaron Keyak, [said](#), "I have particular concern that since [the] Oct. 7 Hamas attacks, there's been an increase in the People's Republic of China's state media and online discourse of antisemitic tropes that Jews control the United States through deep U.S.-Israel ties, as well as control over banks, the media and that they have influence over government leaders."
- » Yaqiu Wang, research director for China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan at the NGO Freedom House, [noted](#) on October 23, "the Chinese information space ... is unique in that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) tightly controls the messages circulating on social media platforms through both automated and manual tools, meaning the hate speech that remains uncensored reflects the regime's decisions."
- Beijing's taking a very clear position that undermines and stands counter to Israel's security needs is striking given the previously seemingly warm and growing relations between China and Israel. That it would put at risk the economic and technological benefits China gained from its investments in Israel suggests that Beijing believes that it has even greater strategic interests at stake in ensuring that Israel does not emerge victorious from its fight against Hamas.
  - » China's interests, however, have nothing to do with survival of Hamas, the final political disposition of the Gaza Strip, or the viability of a two-state solution. Instead, Beijing sees the Israel-Hamas war as a beachhead in a broader global struggle against American primacy.
  - » As one of the United States' closest partners, Israel's defeat at the hands of Hamas or the cessation of the conflict due to international pressure would, China appears to be calculating, represent a major rebuke to and erosion of American power. Other American partners, or countries deciding whether to enter into closer relationships with the United States, might think twice about whether Washington is the right choice, or whether partnering with Beijing might offer greater benefits, if Israel loses the war despite U.S. support.
  - » Perhaps an even greater victory for China would come from the United States deciding to curtail its support for Israel and/or pressure it to end the war prematurely. This would raise even greater doubts globally about the worth and reliability of U.S. security guarantees and possibly push more states into the Chinese camp.
  - » Finally, by claiming to stand with Hamas and the Palestinian cause, China is seeking to bolster its credentials among those countries for whom the anti-imperial agenda resonates most—the Global South made up of post-colonial and non-aligned countries already hesitant about or even distrustful of Washington.
- This same strategic logic has informed Beijing's close relationship with Iran—the chief benefactor of Hamas and other terrorist groups that attack Israeli citizens.
  - » RAND Corporation analyst Derek Grossman has [explained](#) that China's stance vis-à-vis Israel "is mostly because Beijing seeks to raise its stature as a champion of the Global South, especially as India appears to be a formidable rising challenger," and "China is also strengthening its partnership with Iran, in concert with 'no limits' partner Russia, in an 'axis of resistance' against the U.S. and Western democracies."
  - » China and Iran likely view each other's empowerment as strategically useful—if each initiates simultaneous aggression in the Indo-Pacific and the Middle East, respectively, both countries may hope that U.S. power will be spread too thin to respond effectively in both theaters.

- China's accusations that Israel is violating international law and exceeding the permitted scope of self-defense, such as China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi's on [October 14](#), are inaccurate.
  - » As several retired U.S. generals and admirals argued in the JINSA Gaza Assessment Task Force's latest report, [The October 7 War: Observations, October 2023 – May 2024](#), “the IDF has carried out its mission to eliminate the Hamas threat with operational and tactical excellence and in overall compliance with the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC).”
- Despite China's staunch criticism of Israel's operations, Beijing's [hesitancy](#) to endorse the ICC's attempt to obtain arrest warrants for Israeli and Hamas leaders could reflect an unwillingness to concede that Hamas has committed war crimes.
  - » It may also reflect a worry on Beijing's part that the court might eventually attempt to prosecute Chinese leaders for human rights abuses in Chinese territory or for the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) conduct during any future military aggression against Taiwan.
- The economic relationship between China and Israel is [extensive](#)—10 to 20 percent of Israel's foreign investment comes from China, largely in infrastructure and technology, and China is Israel's second-biggest trading partner—but Chinese statements since October 7 make clear the risks of this continuing this relationship.
  - » Given China's alignment with Iran and its proxies, there is substantial [risk](#) that China will exploit its extensive economic investments in Israel to steal intellectual property for sensitive Israeli technologies and transfer it to Iran or Iran-backed groups.
  - » In addition, the more extensive China's economic relationship with Israel, the more effective any Chinese pressure on Israel to defer to China's interests will be.
    - For example, China might threaten to withhold certain economically beneficial investments or to transfer sensitive Israeli technology to Iran if Israel does not comply with a Chinese demand.
- An October 13 [statement](#) from Israel's foreign ministry indicating its disappointment in China's failure to condemn Hamas suggests that Israel is increasingly cognizant of China's hostile diplomatic stance and geopolitical alignment.
  - » Accordingly, steadfast U.S. support for Israel's just and necessary goal of destroying Hamas can help capitalize on this shift of Israeli opinion vis-à-vis China, thus strengthening ties between the United States and a vital partner amid a period of intense geopolitical competition between Washington and Beijing.