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# SEQUENCE MATTERS

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**How we explain a sequence of events can have important political implications.**

During a recent campaign rally in Phoenix, Kamala Harris was distracted by protestors shouting, “Free Palestine.” She said she respected their voices, but the rally's focus was the 2024 presidential race.

Before moving on, she reassured the crowd that she and the President were working around the clock every day to achieve a cease-fire deal and bring all hostages home.

In describing their plan, Harris named the cease-fire deal first and the hostage release second. **I strongly advocate that our politicians change this order of priority: work to get the hostages released first, and a cease-fire deal will follow.** While I’m not an Israeli government official, I’m confident that a cease-fire deal would be reached if all the hostages were released.

Another time leadership did not consider sequencing was when the U.N. Security Council drafted Resolution 242 in 1967. For years, this resolution was the driving force behind the terms Israel and its neighbors established for their co-existence. This Resolution sought to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East by implementing the following two principles:

- (i) *Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;*
- (ii) *Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force;*

Notice what requirement is mentioned first. Yet I believe the requirements specified in the second point are far more likely to create a better relationship in the neighborhood if everyone agrees to follow them.

Unfortunately, no one remembers the second point. What everyone remembers about this Resolution is the call for Israel to withdraw, and the sequence of these statements makes Israel responsible for making the first move.

I am asking all leadership worldwide to be watchful of the sequence of your request. I am asking Hamas to trust, free the hostages, make the first move, and see what happens.

