



Middle East Spotlight

What it Means to be an Ally

What does it mean to be an ally? How does one demonstrate meaningful support for another? The true test of any relationship is how one side acts when the other is vulnerable, endangered and in need of help. Of course, any such test is stressful—so for an alliance to survive long-term, it must be grounded in a firm foundation of shared values.

Such is the case for the vital alliance between the United States and Israel—a bond built on our unshakable commitment to the shared values of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and freedoms of speech and religion. And thanks to a robust and diverse U.S. pro-Israel movement, this bond has evolved and strengthened from Israel’s founding in 1948 to the present day.

The pro-Israel community ensures that America’s leaders are routinely educated on the importance of this mutually-beneficial relationship. The effectiveness of this engagement is evidenced in floor speeches, press statements, and other public addresses in which members of Congress voice their support for Israel in a bipartisan manner.

But beyond shared values and positive words, strong relationships rely on action and not merely rhetoric. When Israel faces unprecedented threats to its safety and security, does America back up its verbal commitment with material support?

The answer is a resounding yes.

At a time when partisan divisions have never been more pronounced, America’s decision makers continue to demonstrate overwhelming bipartisan support for Israel.

On December 16, Congress approved the **Hezbollah International Financing Prevention Act of 2015**—a bipartisan initiative aimed at cutting off the Iranian-backed terrorist organization from foreign financiers. By passing new legislation that would sanction foreign entities knowingly conducting business with Hezbollah, Congress and the United States sent a strong message that funding terrorist activity will not be tolerated. **The bill was passed by unanimous consent in the Senate, and supported with a 425-0 vote in the House.**

Two days later, America once again backed up its rhetorical commitments to Israel with bipartisan action. On December 18, Congress passed its annual spending bill—within that \$1.1 trillion “omnibus” package were several major provisions for Israel: **\$3.1 billion** in U.S. security assistance, **\$474 million** for cooperative missile defense programs, **\$200 million** to replenish U.S. arms stockpiles housed in Israel for emergencies, **\$40 million** for a new collaborative initiative to combat terrorist tunnels in Gaza and Lebanon, and **\$2 million** for U.S.-Israel energy cooperation programs.

A true ally comes to its partner’s defense in times of need—not just with words, but with actions. As our only democratic ally in the Middle East pursues the difficult task of keeping its citizens safe from mounting threats, America’s recent legislative actions makes clear that we stand by our words. We stand with our ally. We stand with Israel.