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CONGRESS CONDEMNS HAMAS, ASSERTS ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO SELF DEFENSE

AIPAC applauds today's overwhelming House passage of a resolution condemning the continued vicious, unprovoked Hamas rocket attacks on Israeli civilians and reiterating America's support for Israel's right to defend its citizens.

Approved by an overwhelming vote of 404-1, this House resolution places blame squarely on the shoulders of the terrorist group Hamas, and by extension its foreign backers Iran and Syria, for undermining the fate of the Palestinian people in pursuit of its extremist, racist ideology. It also calls on America's Arab friends to publically condemn the attacks against Israel and join efforts to isolate Hamas.

These unprovoked, untenable, and deliberate attacks indiscriminately targeting Israeli civilians, many using Iranian and Syrian supplied weapons, are a violation of international law. The primary obligation of any government is to defend its citizens. As this resolution makes absolutely clear, America supports Israel's determined efforts in self-defense against Hamas' war on the people of Israel.

For over two years, communities in southern Israel along the Gaza border have endured more than 4,000 rocket and mortar attacks. The near daily rockets attacks have made existence unbearable for residents, hitting homes, schools and synagogues and injuring hundreds.

Over the last few weeks, Hamas has escalated its attacks. The terrorist group has secured Iranian- and Syrian-supplied Katyusha-style rockets that allow it to fire deeper into Israel and put tens of thousands more Israeli civilians under fire. More than twenty of these longer-range rockets have hit the Israeli urban center of Ashkelon (pop. 120,000), as hundreds of the locally-produced Qassam rockets continue to rain down on Sderot and surrounding areas.

Israel has shown significant restraint in responding to the threat, but faces considerable challenge in fighting an enemy that not only targets innocent Israelis, but exploits the cover of its own civilians to launch attacks. Egypt must take steps to control the border with Gaza and the Palestinian government, under the leadership of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, must take immediate action to fight terrorism in word and deed. The PA has an obligation to isolate the Hamas leadership and put the Palestinian people on a path toward a negotiated settlement with Israel.

AIPAC commends the resolution's sponsors, Reps. Scott Garrett (R-NJ), Eliot Engel (D-NY), Jeb Hensarling (R-TX) and Shelley Berkley (D-NV), for their leadership and efforts to call attention to this important issue.