

ALERT

Updated January 22, 2009

American Leaders Speak Out in Support of Israel's Right to Self-Defense

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- [President Barack Obama](#)
- [Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice](#)

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- [House Minority Leader John Boehner \(R-OH\)](#)
- [Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid \(D-NV\)](#)
- [Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell \(R-KY\)](#)

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- [Eddie Bernice Johnson \(D-TX\)](#)
- [Kenny Marchant \(R-TX\)](#)
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- [Pete Sessions \(R-TX\)](#)
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- [Gerry Connolly \(D-VA\)](#)

Washington

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Wisconsin

- [Steve Kagen \(D-WI\)](#)
- [James Sensenbrenner \(R-WI\)](#)

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- [Gov. Donald Carcieri \(R-RI\)](#)
- [Gov. Jon Corzine \(D-NJ\)](#)
- [State Senator Ted Deutch \(D-FL\)](#)
- [Lieutenant Governor Lee Fisher \(D-OH\)](#)
- [Secretary of State Trey Grayson \(R-KY\)](#)
- [State House Majority Leader Adam Hasner \(R-FL\)](#)
- [State Representative Josh Mandel \(R-OH\)](#)
- [Gov. Martin O'Malley \(D-MD\)](#)
- [Gov. David Paterson \(D-NY\)](#)
- [Gov. Rick Perry \(R-TX\)](#)
- [Former Governor Mitt Romney \(R-MA\)](#)
- [Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger \(R-CA\)](#)
- [Gov. Ted Strickland \(D-OH\)](#)
- [Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaragoisa \(D-CA\)](#)

Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-NY)

“I thank the chairman. Madam Speaker, my colleagues, I spent Sunday in Sderot with Mayor Bloomberg of New York. We were being briefed by some people on the Israeli side of the border with Gaza when suddenly, after 14 missiles had already fallen that morning before we got there, the sirens started screaming, and we were rushed and told we had 20 seconds to get into a fallout shelter before the missile hit, rather petrifying.

I cannot imagine what I would have done had I children out on the street, as happens each and every day, sometimes hourly in that little town, trying to live peacefully across the border from its neighbor.

I listened very, very carefully to our colleagues, especially to the gentleman from Ohio, who has run twice on our side for the Presidency of the United States, and the gentleman from Texas, who ran twice for the Presidency of the United States on the other side of the aisle, and I was wondering, had they become President, either of them, and God forbid our country was struck by missiles, and they had taken the oath to defend our country, how many missiles would have had to have fallen before we struck back?

Countries have rights to defend themselves. It is not just one missile or two missiles or three missiles. From the beginning of this decade, each year over 1,000 missiles have been launched from Gaza on Israel. Thousands of missiles. And yet they have held their strength, they have held their warnings that they issued, with the patience of Job. A country that was founded to protect the lives of Jews from destruction and annihilation after World War II held its calm, held itself together, until the missiles started falling 50 a day, 80 a day, 100 a day. And they warned the Palestinians that they would strike back, and they have, as is their right, as is their responsibility to their citizens.

We are all upset at the loss of innocent lives in this altercation and any altercation. But, you know, it reminds me of my two boys when they were growing up and they would get in a little hassle with each other, and I would separate them and say, Who started this? And Ari would say, Corey hit me back first.

If you don't want to be hit back, don't hit. That is the message. Israel has the right to defend itself, and we stand with Israel as it exercises that right to live in peace with its neighbors.”
(Congressional Record, January 9, 2009)

Rep. John Adler (D-NJ)

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Adler issued the following statement today, at the beginning of his first full day as a Member of the 111th Congress:

“The deadly rocket attacks originating in Hamas-controlled Gaza are not the work of a faceless aggressor. The terrorist organization Hamas is responsible. Israel’s only option is to defend its citizens and I strongly support their efforts to do so. In order for the peace process to begin again, Hamas must end these acts of terror and recognize Israel’s right to exist.”
(Press Release, January 7, 2009)

Rep. Rodney Alexander (R-LA)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Rodney Alexander, R-Quitman, today released the following statement regarding the situation in Gaza:

“I urge the American public to firmly support Israel as our longstanding ally takes measures to defend its people against indiscriminate assault from Hamas terrorists,” said Alexander. “Israel is absolutely warranted in defending itself and in taking all the necessary military steps to guarantee the safety and security of its people from the constant rocket and mortar attacks.”

“Hamas’ relentless disregard for the lives of innocent civilians serves as a continuous reminder that it subsists as nothing more than a terrorist organization,” said Alexander. “Until Hamas decides to permanently halt this relentless cycle of terror, I will firmly stand with our democratic ally as Israel fights to restore security in the region, and to protect its people.”
(Press Release, January 8, 2009)

Rep. Rob Andrews (D-NJ)

“The sovereign Nation of Israel has every right to defend itself against Hamas' continued acts of terror. Hamas’ unwillingness to agree to a durable ceasefire has led to the death of innocent civilians and hindered any progress that was made to sustain peace and security in the region. I strongly support Israel in their difficult decision to respond with force and the United States must stand by its democratic ally in its effort to protect its citizens.” *(Press Release, December 30, 2008)*

Rep. Joe Baca (D-CA)

“Madam Speaker, I rise today to support House Resolution 34 , a resolution to recognize Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the United States' strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Israel continues to be the United States' strongest ally in the Middle East. Now Israel faces a tough situation with her neighbors.

Since 2005, Israel attempted to promote peace with the Palestinians by withdrawing its civilians and soldiers from Gaza in hopes of lessening day to day conflicts.

However, since then Israel has received over 6,000 attacks from the area of Gaza, including a flurry of attacks last month when Hamas abandoned a 6-month ceasefire.

The Hamas leadership continues to hold Palestinian civilians as hostages to its terrorist agenda and Israelis now find themselves within range of Hamas rockets.

The bloodshed and conflict of this situation will only lead to more devastation if nothing is done.

The United States supports Israel and all efforts to promote a cease-fire and a durable and sustainable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of H. Res. 34 , and stand for justice and humanity.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-AL)

WASHINGTON – Congressman Spencer Bachus (AL-6) today issued the following statement on the actions taken by Israel against Hamas in Gaza.

“No country can stand by idly while its citizens are bombarded virtually daily by rocket attacks. Any nation that ignored such a provocation would not exist for long. Israel has a right and indeed a duty to protect itself and its people.” (*Press Release, January 8, 2009*)

Rep. J. Gresham Barrett (R-SC)

“I support the right of Israel to defend itself and its citizens against attack. Hamas has violated a ceasefire agreement by launching daily rocket attacks into the state of Israel, wounding and killing numerous Israelis. Hamas should end its attacks, re-enter into a ceasefire agreement, and begin making a good faith effort toward peace with Israel. I am hopeful that talks will begin soon and a peaceful resolution can be found.” (*Written Statement, January 13, 2009*)

Rep. John Barrow (D-GA)

“Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 34 , supporting Israel and its government's right to defend itself against attacks from Hamas.

The relationship between the United States and Israel is based on a shared commitment to democratic values. Israel has stood on the front lines in confronting those who would use terror against civilians as a means of bringing about political change. During that time, the United States has stood for the political independence and physical security of Israel.

A government's first responsibility is to defend its citizens, and Israel has the same right and obligation to protect her people. If our people were being terrorized daily by a barrage of rocket fire, we would certainly act to defend ourselves, and we would expect no less of our Government.

Those who truly value peace and democracy are united in the belief that the only remedy to this crisis is a successful peace process. Working for peace is not an alternative to security, but is part of security. Without a peace process, and ultimately without peace, Israel remains insecure. That's why I rise in support of H. Res 34 , recognizing Israel's right to defend herself, and that's why I voice my continued support for peace negotiations between Israel and Hamas. I hope that we can all look forward to the day when our countries will be able to devote less of our national treasures to the vital work of survival and self defense, and be able, instead, to devote ourselves to more profitable enterprises.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD)

Washington, DC – “We, as the United States, are first of all, not in a position to make military decisions for Israel and, second, must acknowledge and condemn Hamas’ policies to destroy Israel and deliberately target innocent civilians with rocket attacks,” said Congressman Roscoe Bartlett today concerning the situation in Israel and Gaza.

Congressman Bartlett noted, “I welcome the news that Israel has accepted principles for a permanent cease-fire and initiated a temporary cease-fire to provide humanitarian relief. We cannot force Israel to enter a cease-fire agreement with Hamas.” He added, “Even as we mourn the deaths and wounding of so many people yesterday at the U.N. school and other locations, we have to remember that the Israeli military is defending itself. Israel has a duty to protect residents of Israel against Hamas attacks. It was Hamas that ended the previous cease fire. It was Hamas that sanctioned indiscriminate rocket attacks launched from Gaza aimed at innocent civilians in Israel.”

“I am heartened by efforts by the United States, France, Egypt, the U.N. and the Palestinian Authority to assist Israel and Hamas to pursue diplomatic solutions,” said Congressman Bartlett. “Continuing military operations will inevitably increase collateral damage to crucial infrastructure and cause many more deaths. As long as Hamas pursues the destruction of the state of Israel, residents of Gaza will never be able to enjoy peace and prosperity. Hamas policies are condemning the residents of Gaza to live in misery and poverty and make it impossible to pursue the hope of peaceful co-existence by Israel with a Palestinian state.”
(Press Release, January 7, 2009)

Sen. Evan Bayh (D-IN)

“Mr. President, I rise today to commend Majority Leader Reid and Republican Leader McConnell for introducing S.Res.10, an important piece of legislation which reaffirms the United States’ unwavering support for Israel and Israel’s right to defend itself and protect its citizens. Hamas’ unwillingness to renounce violence and recognize Israel’s right to exist is the central impediment to achieving a lasting peace between the Israelis and Palestinians. I stand strongly with the people of Israel in their efforts to cope with the terrorist threat from Hamas. No nation can be asked to endlessly turn the other cheek when its people are subject to indiscriminate, unprovoked, and lethal missile strikes. Like all people, the citizens of Israel have the right to live safely within secure borders.

While the responsibility for the current violence rests with Hamas, both sides must take every possible step to avoid harming innocent civilians. Furthermore, both sides must work towards a durable and sustainable ceasefire that prevents Hamas from rearming and improves the daily living conditions of the people in Gaza.

The current bloodshed in Gaza is also a grave reminder of Iran’s role in arming, training, and assisting extremist groups like Hamas. The Iranian regime is the world’s most active state sponsor of terrorism. The current violence further underscores the importance of using aggressive sanctions to deter the Iranian regime from taking future actions that destabilize the region and threaten our democratic allies.

We have learned as a nation that terrorism and the advocacy of extremism are not distant problems, but those which we must confront vigilantly. Terrorism has no geographic boundaries. We must continue our efforts to confront Islamic extremism and to eliminate terrorists' ability to strike against the United States and our allies. Therefore, I wholeheartedly support S.Res.10, which underscores our nation's commitment to help provide for Israel's security and to encourage a lasting and secure peace in the Middle East." (*Congressional Record, January 12, 2009*)

"Well, any time you have a war, the consequences are tragic on both sides. You know, some Israeli soldiers were killed, in the last 24 hours, in friendly fire. You have missiles falling on their communities. And, obviously, for the people of Gaza, it's a tragedy.

But what we need here, Andrea, is a resolution -- not just a temporary hiatus, where the war will continue in another six months or 12 months or 18 months and people will be killed then -- we need a real resolution.

And in order for that to happen, only two things, both of which are under the control of Hamas, need to occur. Number one, if they would just stop firing the missiles; and, number two, if they would just agree, at some point, to live in harmony with Israel and not swear to destroy them, then this thing could be resolved, not just once but once and for all.

And so a temporary cease-fire, I'm afraid, would just allow the combatant that is unwilling to agree to peace, Hamas, to rearm and to perpetrate this conflict at a later date. And that's not in anyone's best interest." (*Interview by Andrea Mitchell on MSNBC, January 6, 2009*)

Rep. Melissa Bean (D-IL)

WASHINGTON – Congresswoman Melissa Bean (IL-08) released the following statement today after cosponsoring H.Res.34, which recognizes Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirms the United States strong support for Israel, and supports the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The resolution passed today 390 to 5.

"While a cease-fire agreement could halt the immediate pain and suffering of civilian families on both sides of this conflict, the challenge for the international community is to hold Hamas accountable to honoring it, as they have not on past agreements. A lasting peace can only happen when Israel no longer needs to defend itself from unprovoked attacks." (*Press Release, January 9, 2009*)

Sen. Mark Begich (D-AK)

Sen. Mark Begich said today that he is joining a resolution in the U.S. Senate recognizing the right of Israel to defend itself against attacks from Gaza. Senate Resolution 10, a bipartisan resolution, also reaffirms the United States' support for Israel in its battle with Hamas and supports the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Sen. Begich released the following statement:

“I have deep sympathy for civilian victims on both sides of the Israel/Gaza border. Too many innocent lives are being lost each day.

“It is tragic that Hamas chooses to continue its stated goal of destroying Israel and any two-state solution for peace, and uses rocket launches into Israel and its own people as bait for Israeli retaliation, in order to gain worldwide sympathy. Israel must use discretion in how it prosecutes this defensive action, but it has every right to use force in order to defend itself against this declared war against it by Hamas.

“I would like to see all moderate and peace-loving participants in the region work together toward a solution whereby the residents of Gaza choose a government that will work toward peace and the prosperity that will come from a true and secure two-state solution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict.” (*Press Release, January 13, 2009*)

Rep. Shelley Berkley (D-NV)

“About three Augusts ago, a little over that, 3 1/2 years ago, I was part of a congressional delegation that was on the border between the Gaza and Israel as the Israeli military was removing the last Israeli settlers from the Gaza. As you can imagine, Congressman, it was a very painful thing to watch, seeing families being torn apart, taken away from the lands that they had settled, where nothing had existed before they created their settlements, being taken from their neighbors and the villages that they created, truly oases in the desert, was hurtful. But I understood why the Israelis did it. They unilaterally withdrew from the Gaza with the hope that turning that land back to the Palestinians would have the desired effect of bringing peace to that area.

Rather than the peace that the Israelis had hoped for, the Palestinians, particularly when Hamas took over, became not an area where one would build schools and homes and infrastructure and demonstrate to the world that the Palestinian people were able to create a state of their own, rather than demonstrating to the world that they were capable of self-governance, quite the opposite became the very harsh reality. And what you saw, instead of schools being built and neighborhoods flourishing and businesses being built and infrastructure, hospitals, basic services for the Palestinian people, what happened instead was that the Gaza became a launch pad for a reign of terror upon the Israeli people that lived on the other side of the border.

Rather than reaching out to the Israeli people in an attempt to forge a peaceful relationship between the two peoples, the Gaza has become a hellhole. It's become a hellhole for the Palestinian people, and it is a hellhole for the people of Israel because they are continually barraged by rockets well within the Israeli border.

How many rockets are we talking about? You demonstrated it with your graph. We're talking 2 rockets, 10 rockets, a misfiring? We're talking about 7,000 rockets in the course of a few years. Who can exist, what peoples, what Nation would tolerate that type of continuous assault on their innocent population? There is not one country on the planet that would not respond. And yet with all the panic and the fear and the damage, the psychological damage, and the physical injuries and damage and the death that these rockets have caused, the Israeli

people did not, did not, attack back. But at some point any government worth its weight in salt must defend its people, and that is exactly what Israel has done.

Let me share a story with you, Mr. *Weiner*. A few years ago, I was talking to one of the Middle East ambassadors. And I said to him, Is there no way for you and your government to intervene and tell Hamas, ask Hamas, demand Hamas to stop launching Qassam rockets against the Israeli people?

And his response to me incredibly, when he shrugged his shoulders, it was, Well, the Qassam rockets are very inaccurate.

And I responded to the ambassador, They may be inaccurate unless one falls on your head, and then it's very accurate. It's deadly accurate.

But he shrugged and he said, Well, it's no big deal.

Well, it's a big deal if you're an Israeli and your child was just killed in their school by a Qassam rocket being launched by Hamas from the Gaza. This simply must stop.

But I went further, and I once spoke with the Egyptian ambassador. And I said to him, Mr. Ambassador, is there no way for you and the Egyptian Government to find those tunnels and blow them up so that the flow of arms being supplied mostly by Iran will stop, will cease the flow so that Hamas will not have a ready supply of rockets to be using against the Israeli people?

And again I got another shrug: We don't know where they are. We can't identify them.

I said, The Israelis gave you a list. They know exactly where the tunnels are. You can't blow up those tunnels and prevent the death of innocent Israeli children?

I got no response.

Where was the outrage of the United Nations? Where was the outrage of the people throughout the world that are rioting now in their countries when Israeli children were being killed by Hamas' continuing barrage of rockets? Not a one that I can remember. Not one that I've seen on TV. Not one speech in the United Nations. Not one moment of outrage. It was Israeli children that were being killed and a very patient Israeli Government trying to use every diplomatic tool at their disposal before they had to go in. They did not want to do this. They would not have unilaterally left the Gaza to go back in. It is not something the Israeli Government wanted to do.

When Hamas refused to renew the truce in the middle of December at a time that we're celebrating religious holidays throughout the world, I knew that we were in for an increase in the carnage being rained on Israel, and I'm sorry to say I was right. The Israelis, like any other sovereign nation, have a right to defend their people and protect the people of their country. Israel should not be held to a higher standard, although they hold themselves often enough to a far higher standard.

The Israelis have made two requests of Hamas. These are the two requests: They want an end to the rocket attacks. I don't think that's an unreasonable request. And they want an end to the tunnels, blow up those tunnels to prevent the rearming of a terrorist organization that has a vice grip on the Palestinian people in the Gaza. Which one of those two demands is inappropriate? Which one is unreasonable? I would submit to you, Mr. *Weiner*, neither one.

And for those that are talking about Israel's disproportionate response to 7,000 rockets, to death, to injury, to damage, how about holding the Palestinians to any standard, any measurable civilized standard, and put pressure on Hamas to stop launching those rockets into Israel ? And after all of the last 2 weeks, after the pain on both sides, after the horror being perpetrated by Hamas on both the Israelis and their own people, Hamas is still launching rockets into Israel .

Well, let me say if they might be listening today, this evening as we speak, we can end this thing. We can bring peace. There can be a long-lasting truce if Hamas stops the rocket attacks and if the tunnels are eliminated. And that is what this body, the United Nations, and everyone throughout the planet, throughout this world, ought to be demanding of Hamas.

The human tragedy in the Gaza, the suffering of the Palestinian people, let us put it squarely where it belongs: not on the State of Israel , not on the Israeli people. It rests squarely on the shoulders of the Palestinian leadership. If the Palestinian leadership wanted a Palestinian State, they would have had one years ago. What Hamas is doing is not for the creation of a Palestinian State. It is for the destruction of the State of Israel . And it pains me to say this, Mr. *Weiner*, but if Israel ceased to exist tomorrow, the plight of the Palestinians would be no better than it is today. The suffering of the Palestinians would not magically go away. It is the Palestinian leadership, the leadership in Hamas, that has caused so much pain and suffering for the Palestinian people.

It would be my heartfelt hope with the beginning of a new year and the beginning of a new administration in this country that we can truly bring peace to the Middle East. It's something that I grew up fighting for and caring about. But this cannot stop until the Israelis are secure in their tiny country and free from a constant barrage of rockets and terrorist attacks by a terrorist organization on their border.

And I thank you so much for giving me these few minutes to share my thoughts with you. You are truly an amazing leader, not only in Congress and representing your own district and State so well, but you make me very proud to be associated with you on these issues and so many more. And I thank you for all of that.” (*Congressional Record, January 14, 2009*)

“Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support for this resolution and for Israel's right to defend itself. No nation could be expected to stand idly by as its citizens are bombarded by missiles launched 20, 30, 40 times a day by a terrorist organization on its orders.

These daily attacks have caused death and inflicted enormous physical and emotional damage on the people of Israel. Their government, the Israeli government, has shown extraordinary restraint in not retaliating until now.

For those of my colleagues who expressed concern or outrage for Israel's actions, where was their concern and outrage when Israeli children were killed by indiscriminate Hamas rockets? Where is their outrage when Israel asked Egypt to close the tunnels to stem the flow of weapons coming from Egypt to the Gaza? Where is their outrage then?

Hamas is all too happy to fire their missiles from schools and mosques and houses, putting their own families at risk in order to maximize civilian casualties. Their own leaders cynically embrace a culture of death, not only for Israel, but their own people.

I urge support for this resolution. We should be standing by the only democracy in the Middle East, Israel.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

On December 19, the terrorist organization Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, ended a cease-fire with Israel and began indiscriminately shelling southern Israeli cities, targeting civilians and causing widespread fear and destruction. On Saturday, December 27, Israel responded to those non-stop attacks by targeting Hamas leaders and infrastructure.

Congresswoman Shelley Berkley has released the following statement regarding the ongoing situation in Israel:

“I strongly support Israel’s right to defend itself from Hamas’s unprovoked missile attacks on its citizens. While I am saddened by the loss of civilian lives on both sides, Hamas can –and must – stop this violence by ending their attacks. Hamas places their military installations in civilian areas, in complete disregard for human life, and Hamas deserves sole blame.

“It is essential we stand by our ally Israel at this time and not engage in a double-standard that condemns Israel’s response, but turns a blind eye to the unconscionable attacks that began the violence in the first place. Since leaving Gaza in 2005, Israel has done everything in its power to peacefully stop Hamas from smuggling in weapons. Yet the Arab nations and the UN have done almost nothing to stop this, as more than 4,500 rockets have fallen on Israel, resulting in the senseless deaths of innocent men, women and children.” (*Press Release, December 29, 2008*)

Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA)

“Madam Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes. When a nation's towns and villages are attacked without provocation by nearly 9,000 rockets over the span of 8 years, there could hardly be a more solid case for the use of force in self-defense. At least 700,000 Israelis, 10 percent of that small nation, are now within range of missiles and rockets operated by an Islamist terrorist group committed to Israel's destruction.

I have no trouble justifying the war Israel is undertaking, but I am deeply troubled by the suffering, destruction and loss of innocent life that war inevitably entails, in this case, a war forced upon Israel by a terrorist enemy that not only targets Israeli civilians but that also bases itself among Gazan Palestinian homes, schools, mosques, and hospitals in order to use innocent civilians as human shields and as tools of a propaganda war. It is imperative that a

way be found to stop the killing on both sides but in a manner that will ensure that this round will be the last round.

I know the U.S. and several other nations are working on developing such a plan. Our ally Egypt should be particularly commended for its serious efforts in this regard.

What we need is not merely a cease-fire but a transformative cease-fire. We need to ensure not just that Hamas stops firing rockets into Israel ; we need to make sure that it stops receiving weapons and weapons parts and that it stops smuggling them into the Gaza Strip. We should support Egyptian efforts to prevent this illegal arms trade from crossing the Sinai toward the Gaza border.

Madam Speaker, I commend the Speaker and the bipartisan leadership for authoring this important resolution. It provides a sensible way of understanding how we got to the current situation and of how we should move forward. This is why I support this resolution, and I urge my colleagues to do likewise.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Van Nuys, CA -- Howard L. Berman (D-CA), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, has released the following statement concerning the security situation in Israel:

“Israel has a right, indeed a duty, to defend itself in response to the hundreds of rockets and mortars fired from Gaza over the past week. No government in the world would sit by and allow its citizens to be subjected to this kind of indiscriminate bombardment. The loss of innocent life is a terrible tragedy, and the blame for that tragedy lies with Hamas.” (*Press Release, December 27, 2008*)

Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL)

As a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia, Congressman Bilirakis has a particular interest in monitoring progress in the Middle East, especially as it relates to Israeli security and has issued the following statement:

“Israel is our single most important, strategic ally in the Middle East, serving on the front lines in our joint battle against terrorism and weapons proliferation.

The events of the past few days in Gaza demonstrate unequivocally that the terrorist organization, Hamas, has no interest in attaining peace with Israel. Extraordinary restraint has been exercised by Israel in the face of the constant barrage of rockets that have rained down upon the Israeli civilian population. Last year I visited the traumatized citizens of Sderot, who relayed their heartbreaking stories of the constant fear and terror they live through due to the rocket fire coming out of Gaza. After the fragile cease-fire came to an end, Hamas picked up where it left off and continued their destructive bombardment in southern Israel.

I applaud Israel in her actions to protect her people and target only those Hamas militants that have engaged in these terrorist attacks in Israel. I will continue to work hard as we embark on the 111th Congress next week to assure our ally and friend, Israel, has the means necessary to

resist existential threats from her hostile neighbors, and that she remains a beacon of freedom and liberty in the Middle East.” (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN)

“Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 34 , legislation that not only recognizes Israel's legitimate right to defend itself from terrorist threats, but also expresses this body's steadfast commitment to a strong, vibrant, and long-lasting relationship between the United States and Israel, the only functioning democracy in the Middle East. While rockets, mortars, and homemade weapons continue to rain down on Israel from Lebanon and inside Palestinian controlled territory in Gaza, this resolution places the world on notice that the U.S. House will not waver during Israel's hour of need.

The violence and terror inflicted on the people of Israel by agents of Hamas and their sympathizers represents a continuation of the organization's blood-stained history, and is little more than an extension of a decades-long campaign designed to destroy the State of Israel. It is a moral imperative to stand alongside the people of Israel while their government repels and quells the violence inflicted by Hamas, and today's consideration of H. Res. 34 provides much needed leadership that the international community would be wise to follow.

Make no mistake: the violence, death, and destruction suffered by both the innocent citizens in Israel and the Palestinian people is a tragedy that no man, woman, or child should be forced to endure. Yet this tragedy suffocating the innocents on both sides is not born of a decision taken by the Israeli government, it is singularly the result of a long-planned paramilitary campaign of terror initiated by a terrorist organization.

Madam Speaker, I rise not only to support this timely resolution, but also to join the chorus of voices in this chamber calling for the terrorists in Gaza to put an end to their campaign. Let the violence stop, and the healing process begin. Only then can the diplomatic process have a chance to work towards the international community's goal of a democratic, free, and vibrant State of Israel living side-by-side a peaceful and stable Palestinian community.”
(*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Mayor Michael Bloomberg (I-NY)

“I just wanted to say that I feel very strongly that Israel really does have a right, in fact an obligation, to defend itself against terrorist attacks. New Yorkers certainly know what it's like to be targeted by terrorists and we also know the importance of fighting back, and I really do want to strongly condemn the repeated attacks on Israel and Hamas's decision to break last summer's ceasefire. I think we all had great hopes last summer that people could live together in peace and that, unfortunately, at the moment is not the case.

“The last time I was in Israel I did see the effect of those attacks on the Israeli people. I visited Sderot where the mayor showed me what daily life is under a constant barrage of rocket attacks from Gaza, and, I saw and I heard during that visit, and it's come back to me time and time again over the last few weeks just as the holiday season shared this year by Jews and Muslims and Christians was shattered when Hamas broke the ceasefire and launched rocket

attacks against - and mortar attacks - against Israel. I think both the Bush Administration and the Obama team have been clear that Hamas must end its terrorist attacks, and I stand firmly behind Israel and all we can do is pray for a more peaceful 2009.

"Everybody should have a right to live their lives without worrying about their safety, whether it's safety on the streets from criminals or attacks by terrorists coming in from the air or suicide bombers or anything else. We just have to find a way in 2009 to stop killing each other, which, unfortunately, terrorists seem determined to continue to do." (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Outgoing House Minority Whip Roy Blunt (R-MO)

Washington, D.C. - Southwest Missouri Congressman today issued the following statement regarding the ongoing conflict in southern Israel and Gaza:

"Nobody, and certainly not innocent Israeli and Palestinian civilians, wanted to see this conflict break out yet again. This violence was uncalled for and avoidable, but entirely provoked by the leaders of Hamas with months of rocket attacks on Israeli towns and cities.

"I am hopeful - as are leaders around the world - that peace can return to the border between Israel and Gaza, but that peace is only possible if Hamas promises to cease their continued attacks on Israeli civilians." (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Rep. John Boccieri (D-OH)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Shortly after being sworn in as a freshman member of the 111th Congress, Congressman John Boccieri today issued the following words of support for Israel as it fights back against Hamas terrorists.

"In the past year alone, Israel has been barraged by nearly 3,000 rockets from Hamas terrorists. No sovereign state can be expected to endure constant attacks without acting to defend itself and its citizens, and I support the right of Israel fight back against Islamic extremists.

"Having spent time in the Middle East, I know that the Palestinian people are not to blame for the actions of the extremists that hide among them. Like them, I hope for a quick and peaceful resolution to the conflict currently taking place; however, that cannot happen as long as Hamas continues to fire hundreds of rockets into Israel while indifferent regional actors either passively watch or, even worse, support these cowardly attacks. Israel is a friend and ally, and the United States will stand behind Israeli leaders as they continue to defend their homes and their citizens." (*Press Release, January 7, 2009*)

House Minority Leader John Boehner (R-OH)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – House Republican Leader John Boehner (R-OH) today issued the following statement supporting a measure to reaffirm the alliance between the United States and Israel and condemn the terrorist group Hamas' violent attacks against the country:

“The United States has stood with our Israeli allies for more than six decades, and we stand strongly with them during the current conflict. Hamas' decision to break the ceasefire agreement last month in order to launch violent attacks against Israel is one that cannot be tolerated. Congress overwhelmingly supports Israel's right to defend itself and its continuation as a democratic Jewish state. In the interest of long-term and long-sought peace in the Middle East, it is time for Hamas to end the violence and honor the ceasefire agreement with Israel.” (*Press Release, January 9, 2009*)

Washington, Dec 30 - House Republican Leader John Boehner (R-OH) today issued the following statement supporting the state of Israel as attacks continue in Gaza:

“Israel has the right to defend its citizens and territory, as it is doing. The current outbreak of violence is the result of Hamas' decision to break the ceasefire agreement on December 19. The only way for the violence to end is for Hamas to stop its attacks on Israel immediately, honor the ceasefire agreement and work in good faith to establish a peaceful resolution.” (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Sen. Christopher “Kit” Bond (R-MO)

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Kit Bond, Vice Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, today voiced his support for Israel's response to Hamas-led attacks on the Democratic nation.

“Israel has every right to defend its borders and protect its people,” said Bond. “With their unprovoked attacks on Israel, Hamas is demonstrating their true commitment is to violence, not peace.”

Bond, who two weeks ago returned from a visit to Israel, pointed out that Israel offered an olive branch by fully disengaging from Gaza in August of 2005. Unfortunately, the Israelis' peace offering has been met with continued rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel. These Hamas-led attacks have increased by 500 percent since disengagement and during the informal six-month cease-fire some 215 rockets were launched at Israel.

Bond urged President-elect Obama and the new Democratic-led Congress to continue strong support for Israel. Bond emphasized that America and the international community must also be committed to securing a just and peaceable agreement between Israel and Palestine through a two-state solution.

“It is critical that America remain steadfast in our support of Israel's right to exist and protect its borders,” said Bond. “I hope President-elect Obama uses his new momentum in office to push for a two-state solution that will bring lasting peace to Israelis and Palestinians living in this troubled region.”

Essential to supporting Israel's sovereignty is continuing American-Israeli defense cooperation, said Bond. The United States must provide Israel with anti-missile defense systems, like Arrow 3 which Bond supported funding for, that will help keep the Israeli people safe from the multiple dangers they face in the region.

In addition to diplomatic and military efforts, Bond noted the importance of American support for humanitarian – or “Smart Power” initiatives to promote peace. While in Israel, Bond was briefed on the success of these initiatives in influencing hearts and minds, like USAID clean sewer and water infrastructure projects in both Israel and Palestinian communities. Bond also pointed to the Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem, which predominantly serves pregnant Palestinian mothers and babies, as a shining example of promoting peace through serving the poor. Bond secured federal funding for Holy Family Hospital which provides quality health care regardless of religion or ethnicity. (*Press Release, December 29, 2008*)

Rep. Dan Boren (D-OK)

WASHINGTON D.C. – U.S. Congressman Dan Boren issued the following statement today regarding the ongoing crisis in Israel and Gaza.

“I affirm the right for Israel as a sovereign nation to militarily defend its people against attacks from Hamas. The continued rocket-fire into Israel from Gaza by Hamas militants must stop immediately. I am greatly concerned by reports from the international media and humanitarian organizations about the mounting tally of civilian casualties on both sides of this conflict. I urge President-elect Barack Obama, once he is sworn into office, to take swift and decisive action through diplomacy to reach a peaceful settlement to the crisis.” (*Press Release, January 8, 2009*)

Rep. Leonard Boswell (D-IA)

“Madam Speaker, I strongly support Israel's right to defend itself against the rocket attacks by Hamas--attacks which have killed and injured many Israeli citizens. Israel's actions are understandable. We must stand by our ally and be involved in any negotiations. I'm heartened to learn of a possible cease fire proposal. However, any cease fire must ensure an end to the terrorist attacks by Hamas.” (*Congressional Record, January 8, 2009*)

Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA)

"The promise of peace in the Middle East will not be realized until attacks against Israel by terrorist organizations stop completely. No country in the world would stand for its citizens being targeted by rockets without taking appropriate action in self defense.

"It is tragic that this crisis-which was initiated by Hamas- has come to this. It is time for a real and sustainable cease-fire with complete calm on all sides. The United States and all nations of goodwill must assist in the peace process for the good of all the innocents and for the good of the world." (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Rep. Kevin Brady (R-TX)

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Kevin Brady (R- The Woodlands) issued the following statement on the escalation of hostilities between Israel and Hamas:

“Israel is well within its rights as a sovereign nation to defend itself from terrorist attacks. Since the Egyptian-mediated truce ended just over ten days ago, Hamas has bombarded Israel with thousands of rockets – one even struck an empty kindergarten in Beersheba, Israel’s fifth largest city. While I continue to hold out hope for a peaceful solution, I am disheartened by Hamas statements such as "Rockets will be on your daily agenda.” (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Rep. Paul Broun (R-GA)

“I thank the gentleman for yielding. I appreciate my Democratic colleague for bringing this very important issue to the forefront, and I support your effort to do so, and I trust that we across the aisle can continue to support Israel .

In the Torah, in the Old Testament of the Bible, we read: Blessed is the Nation that blesses Israel , and cursed is the Nation that curses Israel . We as a Nation have been extremely blessed by our creator, by God, and I believe a big part of that, a huge part of that is because we have blessed Israel and supported Israel . These people are under attack by terrorists who consider Jewish people dogs, less than human, and we need to support Israel .

I highly congratulate my Democratic colleague for bringing this forward, and I encourage our colleagues to continue to support Israel , to continue to do what we can to make sure that the Israeli citizens remain safe against these heinous attacks by Hamas, by Hezbollah, by the Iranian people who are funding both organizations. So we need to absolutely continue to support Israel so that God will continue to support America, and I congratulate my colleague for bringing this forward, and I look forward to working with you to continue to support Israel.” (*Congressional Record, January 7, 2009*)

Rep. Corrine Brown (D-FL)

(Washington, D.C.) Congresswoman Corrine Brown made the following statement:

“I am deeply saddened by the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and am extremely concerned about the hundreds of innocent civilians that have been killed or wounded on both sides of the conflict thus far. I wholeheartedly believe the nation of Israel has the right to defend itself against the barrage of rocket attacks launched by Hamas, as well as against the constant threat of terrorism carried out by Hamas and its regional allies, Iran and Syria.

Since I came to Washington as Florida’s third district representative in 1993, I have been a strong supporter of the State of Israel. My first congressional trip in fact, was a CODEL with AIPAC (the American Israel Public Affairs Committee) to Israel, where I was most impressed by the country’s beauty, history, and of course, its people. I have always voted 100% in favor

of all issues relating to Israel, such as legislation relating to funding, or Resolutions calling for Israel's right to defend itself and condemning terrorist attacks against Israel (including H Res 34, which passed the House last Friday, January 8th, and declared that Congress 'recognizes Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirms the United States' strong support for Israel, and supports the Israeli-Palestinian peace process'). Just last year, when I traveled on a House Transportation Committee CODEL to Egypt, I met with Egyptian officials and discussed issues such as Gaza and the troubled relationship between the Palestinians, the Arab World, and the State of Israel.

We need to make every effort to end Hamas' rocket attacks into Israel and work for there to be a plan in place to prevent weapons from being illegally smuggled into Gaza from Egypt. If that is achieved, it is my intention to work for a durable peace that will put a permanent end to the regional violence and war." (*Press Release, January 15, 2009*)

Rep. Ginny Brown-Waite (R-FL)

"I support Israel's right to defend its citizens against constant attacks from the Hamas terrorists. All Americans should be encouraged to reach out to our Jewish Brethren to let them know of our understanding of the situation and to loudly proclaim Israel's actions as justified. For over 8 years, thousands of rockets and mortars have been fired into Israeli territory threatening the lives and security of Jewish families, their homes, schools and sacred worship sites. The Hamas terrorists do not respect property or lives and are ruthless in their hatred and they have no intention of ever abiding by a cease fire agreement. In fact, the recent cease fire was never honored by the Palestinians because they engaged in over 540 continuous attacks launched from the Gaza strip into Israel.

"When I was in Israel I saw first hand the humanitarian compassion of the Israeli people whether through the Hadassah Hospital where they treat the terrorists or through truckloads of food and other necessary supplies sent into the Gaza area. It is unconscionable that Hamas terrorists act in such a barbarian manner toward the Israeli people who have reached out in peaceful actions to attempt to end the conflict. Until Hamas is serious about any kind of peaceful co-existence, it is imperative that Israel have our support for their actions to defend its people from continuous terrorism." (*Press Release, January 2, 2009*)

Rep. Vern Buchanan (R-FL)

"All Americans should stand behind the courageous Israelis fighting to defend themselves from an incessant barrage of Hamas-sponsored terrorism.

"For far too long, Hamas has been launching rockets into Israel without penalty. Even after Israel fully withdrew from Gaza in 2005, Hamas continued to launch thousands of rockets and mortars into the Southern part of Israel.

"Israel's response this week proves that there will be consequences. This confrontation can be resolved by Hamas immediately ending its unprovoked attacks against Israel. Once that happens, efforts towards reaching a promising solution for long-term peace can resume." (*Constituent Letter, January 2, 2009*)

State Rep. Armond Budish (D-OH)

“I believe the United States must stand behind its great friend and ally in the war on terror – Israel – in its own defense against the forces of terror supported by Hamas. Hamas has chosen to ignore repeated overtures for the Palestinians’ peaceful co-existence with Israel and, as a result, has put innocent families on both sides of this struggle in grave danger. Israel’s government has the right and responsibility to defend its land and its people from terror. In that same vein, innocent Palestinian families should not be punished because of their own leaders’ failings. I hope all parties involved – with help from America’s leaders – find a way to end the violence once and for all so that Israel can exist forever in peace with its neighbors.” (*Public Statement, January 8, 2009*)

Rep. Dan Burton (R-IN)

“Madam Speaker, I am proud to be an original cosponsor and strong supporter of House Resolution (H. Res.) 34 which expresses the United States House of Representatives strong support for and commitment to Israel and recognizes that Israel has a fundamental right to defend its citizens against violent attacks.

Back in 2005, I spoke to this House to express my profound concern about Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. I feared that Islamic radicals would exploit that opportunity to jump-start the peace process and instead use Gaza as a launching pad for attacks on Israel; undermining the peace process, exacerbating global and regional terrorism and moving the Middle East one step closer to all out war. I am sad to see that circumstances have proven that my concerns were justified.

There can be no negotiations with--and no concession to--terrorists like Hamas; who refuse to even accept Israel's right to exist. If the world wants calm to return to the Middle East it must speak with one voice--as this House is speaking with one voice today--and tell the leaders of Hamas, and their handlers in Tehran--that blame for this bloodshed falls squarely on their shoulders. To end that bloodshed--and to bring humanitarian relief to the people living in Gaza, Hamas must immediately end the rocket and mortar attacks against Israel and verifiably dismantle its terrorist infrastructure.

Israel and the United States have shared a special bond since the founding of the modern Jewish State in 1948. As a lone State fighting for freedom and democracy in a region dominated by authoritarian and military regimes, Israel is the only country in the Middle East that the United States can fully count on to stand firm against the terrorists and oppressors.

As we continue to fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region by rogue regimes, and work to halt the States who continue to sponsor terrorism, Israel stands as a lone and vital ally. Similarly, Israel stands as an important strategic partner with regard to our joint efforts to stop the spread of Islamic radicalism.

We all support the cause of peace; we all want to see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resolved but will we ever reach that goal if the rockets and mortars do not stop; that is the first step.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support H. Res. 34.” (*Congressional Record*, January 9, 2009)

Former President George W. Bush

Good morning. Over the past week, I have been monitoring the situation in the Middle East closely with the members of my national security team. Secretary Rice is actively engaged in diplomacy. And I've been in contact with leaders throughout the region -- including the King of Saudi Arabia, the King of Jordan, the President of Egypt, the President and Prime Minister of the Palestinian Territories, and the Prime Minister of Israel.

This recent outburst of violence was instigated by Hamas -- a Palestinian terrorist group supported by Iran and Syria that calls for Israel's destruction. Eighteen months ago, Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in a coup, and since then has imported thousands of guns and rockets and mortars. Egypt brokered a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel, but Hamas routinely violated that ceasefire by launching rockets into Israel. On December 19th, Hamas announced an end to the ceasefire and soon unleashed a barrage of rockets and mortars that deliberately targeted innocent Israelis -- an act of terror that is opposed by the legitimate leader of the Palestinian people, President Abbas.

In response to these attacks on their people, the leaders of Israel have launched military operations on Hamas positions in Gaza. As a part of their strategy, Hamas terrorists often hide within the civilian population, which puts innocent Palestinians at risk. Regrettably, Palestinian civilians have been killed in recent days.

The United States is deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation facing the Palestinian people. Since Hamas's violent takeover in the summer of 2007, living conditions have worsened for Palestinians in Gaza. By spending its resources on rocket launchers instead of roads and schools, Hamas has demonstrated that it has no intention of serving the Palestinian people. America has helped by providing tens of millions of dollars in humanitarian aid, and this week we contributed an additional \$85 million through the United Nations. We have consistently called on all in the region to ensure that assistance reaches those in need. And as I told President Mubarak, America appreciates the role Egypt has played in facilitating the delivery of relief supplies in recent days.

In addition to reducing humanitarian suffering, all nations must work toward a lasting end to the violence in the Holy Land, and a return to the path of peace. The United States is leading diplomatic efforts to achieve a meaningful ceasefire that is fully respected. Another one-way ceasefire that leads to rocket attacks on Israel is not acceptable. And promises from Hamas will not suffice -- there must be monitoring mechanisms in place to help ensure that smuggling of weapons to terrorist groups in Gaza comes to an end. I urge all parties to pressure Hamas to turn away from terror, and to support legitimate Palestinian leaders working for peace.

In the days ahead, the United States will stay closely engaged with our partners in the region, in Europe, and in the international community. My Administration will continue to keep the President-elect and his team informed. And America's objectives in the Middle East will

remain clear: We seek security and peace for our allies, the free people of Israel. For the Palestinian people, we seek a peaceful and democratic Palestinian state that serves its citizens and respects its neighbors. For all in the region, we seek an end to terror. And we seek an enduring peace based on justice, dignity, and human rights for every person in every nation of the Middle East.

Thank you for listening.

(Presidential Radio Address, January 2, 2009)

Rep. John Campbell (R-CA)

Washington- Today, U.S. Rep. John Campbell (R-CA) issued the following statement regarding the current situation in the Gaza Strip:

“I have been a long and vocal supporter of the rights of Israel and its ability to defend itself in accordance with international law. The facts are clear; the current outbreak of violence is a direct result of the decision by the leaders of Hamas to flagrantly break the ceasefire agreement on December 19.”

“I strongly support the right of Israel to defend its citizens and its territory. I sincerely hope that the leaders of Hamas will cease their attacks on Israel immediately and indefinitely. I pray that the violence will soon come to an end, and that both Israel and Hamas can negotiate in good faith toward the establishment of a peaceful and lasting resolution. My thoughts and prayers go out to those who have lost their lives and who have been injured in this unfortunate occurrence.”

Campbell went on to say: “If the United States were attacked by one of its neighbors, or any other foreign power for that matter, we would respond accordingly, citing our national self interest and the right to defend our citizens and sovereignty. Israel is conducting its actions much the same as the United States would.” *(Press Release, January 6, 2009)*

House Minority Whip Eric Cantor (R-VA)

“Madam Speaker, colleagues, I don't think there is any of us who would doubt a nation's right to defend its citizens and to defend its population. That's why I rise in support of this resolution. I thank the sponsors, the gentleman from California, the gentelady from Florida, for bringing this forward.

At this time it is very, very important for us in the United States to stand tall in defense of our democratic allies, Israel's right to defend its borders, to defend its people.

I stand here in support of Israel because I have been there. I've seen Sderot. One of the most memorable visits to Israel that I've been on, I visited with a family, a family that lived in a town called Gush Katif. It was a town in the southern portion of the Gaza Strip. I visited with them almost 3 1/2 years ago when it was just after Israel's unilateral pullout of the Gaza Strip.

This family had two children, parents--professional parents--who had just gone through the wrenching process of uprooting their family, leaving their home, in hopes of a better life. The parents said to me one of the most difficult jobs was to explain to their children why they needed to leave their life and their home. These parents said they told their children they were going to leave because they needed to be sure that Israel had every chance imaginable for peace so they could leave in peace.

I actually cannot imagine what those parents are going through now. Three-and-a-half years later they've settled in the area of Sderot, and life could not be any more frightening for them or their children.

When they moved out of the Gaza Strip, they joined the group of citizens of Israel who have to live by the 15-second rule. They have to know, their children have to know, where a safe spot is within 15 seconds of a siren going off. That's the unimaginable fear that they live in day in and day out. Even when these people take vacation and leave Israel, their children, immediately upon arriving at their destination, ask the question, Where is the safe place? Where do I need to run and hide from the rockets?

That's the mentality. That's the culture that has bred because of the incessant, tireless firing of rockets by Hamas aimed at civilians.

Madam Speaker, that is the issue. Israel has a foe on many of its borders, certainly to the south, that is determined to kill its civilians. I don't think any of us would want any of our population in this country to be subjected to that type of terror, nor would we sit here and allow it. That's why Israel has taken the action that it has.

After trying to stop the rockets through third-party negotiations, cease-fires, and even lodging complaints at the United Nations, Israel has taken defensive action. And today, we speak as one body in support of our democratic ally, Israel. We stand up to reaffirm the vibrant relationship that our two countries share, a relationship underpinned by shared values like respect for human life, democracy, and a relationship strengthened by our indispensable strategic interests." (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

"During this difficult war in the Gaza Strip, we stand with Israel. Why? Because we have been to Israel. We have seen Sderot.

In August 2005 and again in 2007, we visited the region of southern Israel that includes this embattled Israeli border town. Taken together, the trips helped us define the historical and military context for Israel's current action in Gaza.

Our 2005 visit to Israel took place during the "disengagement" period, when Israel painfully uprooted its military and all Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip. Former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon made the decision to leave in spite of significant domestic opposition. We remember how divided Israeli society was, with critics defiantly brandishing orange protest ribbons from their cars. Mr. Sharon's goal, however, was an international show of good faith to kick-start a moribund peace process by giving the Palestinians what they asked for: full control of Gaza.

The plan collapsed. Israel's good intentions were never reciprocated. Instead of building roads, bridges, schools and industry, Hamas and other terrorists wasted millions turning Gaza into an armory. The already flimsy notion that Palestinian terrorism was a consequence of Israeli occupation -- an article of faith among those currently decrying Israel's "aggression" -- blew up along with the 7,000 indiscriminate rockets Palestinian terrorists began to launch into Israel.

By the time we returned to the border area in 2007, formerly sleepy southern Israeli towns like Sderot were gripped by fear. Each day, scores of rockets pounded the region. It reminded us of how life was paralyzed in the Washington metropolitan area when just a single sniper fired random shots at civilians. But southern Israel was far worse. We remember Israeli families from Sderot describing how every facet of their lives was consumed by the "15-second rule": Each time a rocket was fired from Gaza, the Israeli government sounded a siren indicating 15 seconds to take cover. We were told by Israelis those tasks as simple as taking a shower or stepping outside to grab a newspaper felt like a game of Russian roulette. We met families whose children had lost the ability to speak, and who no longer had control of their basic bodily functions -- due to the profound and ever-present fear.

Prior to military action, Israel tried a number of other options to stop the rockets, all to no avail. Israel pleaded with Palestinian terror groups to stop their attacks. Israel raised numerous complaints at the United Nations that fell on deaf ears. Israel imposed a blockade of Gaza to deprive Hamas terrorists of the rockets and weapons being used to attack Israel. Israel pressed Egypt to cut down on smuggling tunnels used to deliver rockets and weapons to terrorists. And most recently, Israel worked with Egypt to broker a six-month cease-fire with Hamas.

As Israel negotiated for peace, Hamas built up its weapons supply, acquiring longer-range, more powerful rockets, which are now paralyzing almost 1 million Israelis. Israel's decision to go to war came late last month when Hamas declared that it would not renew the Egyptian-brokered, six-month cease-fire (a cease-fire, it should be noted, that Hamas frequently violated and was urged by Egypt to restore).

In any armed conflict, both sides are obligated by international law to seek to minimize civilian casualties. At a time when far too many civilians are falling victim in this conflict, we urge adherence to this essential principle just as we encourage all sides to ensure that humanitarian relief reaches civilians in Gaza. What distinguishes the two sides, however, is their very aim. While Israel targets military combatants, Hamas aims to kill as many Israeli civilians as possible. Hamas, after all, is one of the Middle East's most notorious terrorist outfits. Since its inception in 1987, it has worked systematically to fulfill the goal laid out in its charter: the destruction of Israel. During the last Intifada, Hamas claimed credit for 52 suicide bombings that killed 288 Israelis, according to Israeli government figures.

A culture that celebrates death is only too happy to sacrifice its own people for the sake of rallying world support. In the heat of war, Hamas is holding true to its indisputable record as it launches rockets from neighborhoods, schools, markets and mosques. This is in stark contrast with Israelis, who drop leaflets and make phone calls to Palestinian civilians in targeted areas, alerting the civilians, but forfeiting the element of surprise.

Like most Americans, we identify strongly with Israel's ongoing, elusive quest to achieve peace and security in a dangerous part of the world. We recognize that by arming and training

Hamas, Iran has made this latest Israel-Hamas war a key front in its effort to remake the region in its own radical image.

America would never sit still if terrorists were lobbing missiles across our border into Texas or Montana; and just as we assert our right to defend ourselves, Israel has every right to protect its own citizens from the implacable foes on its borders. Support for Israel in her time of need, from both Democrats and Republicans, is not just the logical choice. It is both a strategic and moral imperative.”

House Republican Whip Eric Cantor represents Virginia's 7th Congressional District. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer represents Maryland's 5th Congressional District. (*Washington Times, January 9, 2009*)

In response to the Israeli Defense Force's operations against terrorism in the Gaza strip, Congressman Eric Cantor (R-VA) released the follow statement:

“The United States and our allies in the war on terror must support the actions by the Israeli government to protect its citizens from unprovoked violence.

“Israel's campaign is a defensive measure to stop the daily rocket attacks against unarmed Israelis. The terrorist group Hamas increased the rocket attacks after ignoring entreaties by Israel and Egypt to extend a six-month ceasefire. Just yesterday it was reported that terrorists fired some 80 rockets into Israel.

“The Israelis have proven time and time again their willingness to work with their neighbors for peace. Despite their best efforts, the Israelis have been forced to respond to terrorism with justifiable and understandable force to ensure their security. In contrast, Hamas has once again demonstrated its willingness to murder innocent Israelis and Palestinian civilians to achieve their political goals.

“This period will be neither easy nor short, and will require the determination and perseverance of the world community to stand with Israel to dismantle the terrorist group Hamas and punish nations who sponsors terror like Iran.” (*Press Release, December 28, 2008*)

Rep. Michael Capuano (D-MA)

“Once again the world witnesses appalling carnage in the Middle East. The casualties are terrible, and any feeling person must sympathize with the suffering experienced by civilians, in Gaza and in southern Israel. It is time to commit ourselves to a negotiated peace, a two-state solution that acknowledges the right of Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace and freedom. Israel has the right to defend its citizens from rocket attacks. Palestinians have the right to expect from their elected leaders realism in the face of history. Israel has defended itself successfully for sixty years and will continue to do so. I urge that its leaders also commit themselves to confidence-building measures with Palestinians who seek peace and to cooperation with them to improve the lives of the Palestinian and Israeli people.

I urge President-elect Obama to quickly designate a Special Envoy for Mideast Peace. This would be an important expression of our concern for freedom, dignity, and well-being of all peoples of the region. A ceasefire, observed by all parties, credibly verified and effectively monitored, could be an important first step, but it is not a substitute for sustained, purposeful diplomacy.” (*Public Statement, January 7, 2009*)

Gov. Donald Carcieri (R-RI)

“From the birth of the modern State of Israel, the United States has had a special relationship with Israel, relying on her as our strongest ally in that troubled part of the world, and sharing the ideals of freedom and democracy.

Today, once again, the sounds of conflict dominate that region. We stand with Israel to insist not only on the preservation of her sovereignty and freedom, but also on the desirability of a peace that is meaningful and long-lasting.

Those of us who stand watching, hoping for the benefits of peace for all involved, must pray and work for the highest good: that people be respected, communications be honest, agreements be trustworthy, the rights of all be protected, that freedom and human life be revered.

Gathering together in solidarity reassures each one of us that yearning for a resolution of conflict is not foolhardy; it multiplies the efforts of each person who prays or hopes or acts for that peace. Please know that I am with you in this journey of peace that is long but worth every step taken.” (*Public Statement, January 4, 2009*)

Sen. Benjamin Cardin (D-MD)

“Madam President, a nation's first responsibility is to defend its citizens against hostile threats. The United States exercised that responsibility when the Taliban Government of Afghanistan supported terrorist attacks against our country. Israel has the responsibility to protect its citizens from Hamas terrorist attacks.

I am deeply saddened by the continued violence and loss of innocent lives on both sides of the Israel-Gaza border.

I strongly support Israel's right to defend its citizens against threats to its security and its existence. I wholeheartedly agree with President-elect Obama who defined the problem very clearly:

If somebody was sending rockets into my house, where my family slept at night I'm going to do everything in my power to stop that.

The recent military action in Gaza is in direct response to numerous rocket and mortar attacks from militants in the Hamas-controlled Gaza, which have killed and injured Israeli citizens and currently paralyzes the southern regions of Israel.

Southern Israel cities have been the target of over 4,000 rockets and thousands of mortar shells since 2001, the majority of which were launched after Israel withdrew from Gaza in August 2005. During the more recent 6-month truce, more than 215 rockets were launched at Israel. Hamas has been extending the range of its striking capability, with new rockets supplied by Iran . The Israeli Government now knows that Hamas had acquired rockets that can reach Ashdod and even the outskirts of Beersheba.

Hamas' willingness to extend its reach deeper into Israel and its overall failure to end attacks exacerbates the already fragile humanitarian situation for the residents of Gaza and undermines efforts to attain peace and security in the region. As a result of the fighting, Gaza City and its main medical center, Shiffa Hospital, have been left without electricity and hospitals are pushed beyond their capacity to handle the number of victims. Hamas seems to care more about inflicting damage on Israel than the protection and welfare of its own citizens.

Hamas poses a critical challenge to the regional peace process. Labeled as a terrorist organization but holding seats in the Palestinian Government and acting as the controlling authority in Gaza, the organization's leaders encourage violence and cling to the belief that Israel itself should be destroyed. Questions remain as to whether or not the organization should even be included in peace negotiations, but the fact remains that the threat Hamas poses to Israel is an obstacle to any negotiation efforts.

I urge Israel and the Palestinians to take advantage of the current efforts to broker a sustainable cease-fire and a negotiated peaceful settlement. Any such cease-fire must include Hamas' ending its rocket and mortar attacks, recognize its neighbor's right to exist, renounce violence, and honor all past agreements in order to move toward a two-state solution based on mutual peace and security.” (*Congressional Record, January 7, 2009*)

Washington, DC -- U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, released the following statement today:

“I strongly urge Hamas to bring an end to its rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza that have killed and injured Israeli citizens. Israel has taken actions to defend itself and its people in an effort to restore security in the region. It is in everyone’s interest, particularly the innocent lives at risk on both sides of the border, that Hamas bring an end to its aggression, recognize its neighbor’s right to exist, and work toward mutual peace and security.” (*Press Release, December 29, 2008*)

Rep. Dennis Cardoza (D-CA)

“Madame Speaker, I rise today to strongly condemn Hamas for its repeated rocket and mortar attacks against Israel in recent weeks. I deeply regret the loss of innocent civilian life in Israel and Gaza and urge Hamas, for the sake of its own people and those in the region, to immediately cease the attacks and agree to a lasting truce with its democratic neighbor.

As our strongest ally in the Middle East, I believe Israel has the right to defend its citizens from the constant barrage of Hamas rocket attacks from inside Gaza. For too long, Hamas has

used terrorism against Israel to destabilize the region and prevent peace for the people of Israel and the Palestinian territories. As long as Hamas continues to attack innocent Israelis and use ordinary Palestinians as human shields, I will continue to support Israel's right to self-defense and its stated goal of preventing Hamas from firing rockets into Israel.

I remain hopeful that the United States and its allies can help bring a sustainable ceasefire to the region through diplomacy and create the conditions necessary for a durable peace.”
(*Congressional Record*, January 6, 2009)

Rep. Russ Carnahan (D-MO)

“Rocket attacks from Hamas-controlled Gaza into Israel are designed to inflict fear into the lives of innocent civilians. The attacks are a cowardly act of terror and should immediately stop. Israel has an undeniable right to take action to defend its people. As we begin a new year I am hopeful both sides accept a truce that is respected by Hamas.

Shortly the United States will be swearing in a new President who is committed to taking a more hands-on approach to peace in the Middle East. Today the Palestinian and Israeli people have the opportunity to take the first step and show the world that they are willing to live peacefully with one another.” (*Press Release*, December 30, 2008)

Rep. Christopher Carney (D-PA)

Washington, D.C.—Congressman Christopher P. Carney issued the following statement on the Israel/Gaza conflict:

“While I am saddened by the loss of innocent lives on both sides of the border between Israel and Gaza, no sovereign nation can be expected to absorb relentless missile attacks without defending itself. While I am not surprised by their actions, I am still disappointed by Hamas' refusal to stop terrorizing the people of Israel. I remain concerned, too, that Iran's ties to Hamas are only further exacerbating the current conflict. Despite being on his way out of office, I implore President Bush and his diplomatic team to help establish a ceasefire so that regional stakeholders can begin meaningful negotiations toward a more lasting peace.” (*Press Release*, January 8, 2009)

Sen. Bob Casey, Jr. (D-PA)

WASHINGTON, DC- U.S. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, cosponsored a resolution that recognizes Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza and reaffirms the United States' strong support for Israel. The resolution passed the Senate earlier today.

“Israel, like every other state, has the sovereign right to defend itself against attacks on its citizens. The situation we see today in Gaza is a tragedy, but we cannot afford a return to the status quo where Hamas continues to terrorize the Israeli people. I look forward to working with the incoming Obama Administration to restore American leadership on behalf of a

durable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with two states co-existing side by side in peace and security.”

The resolution, introduced by Senate Majority leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) resolves the following:

- 1) Expresses vigorous support and unwavering commitment to the welfare, security, and survival of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state with secure borders, and recognizes its right to act in self-defense to protect its citizens against acts of terrorism;
- (2) Reiterates that Hamas must end the rocket and mortar attacks against Israel, recognize Israel’s right to exist, renounce violence, and agree to accept previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians;
- (3) Encourages the Administration to work actively to support a durable, enforceable, and sustainable cease-fire in Gaza, as soon as possible, that prevents Hamas from retaining or rebuilding the capability to launch rockets and mortars against Israel and allows for the long term improvement of daily living conditions for the ordinary people of Gaza;
- (4) Believes strongly that the lives of innocent civilians must be protected and that all involved should continue to work to address humanitarian needs in Gaza;
- (5) Supports and encourages efforts to diminish the appeal and influence of extremists in the Palestinian territories, and strengthen moderate Palestinians who are committed to a secure and lasting peace with Israel; and
- (6) Reiterates its strong support for U.S. government efforts to promote a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a serious and sustained peace process that leads to the creation of a viable and independent Palestinian state living in peace alongside a secure State of Israel.

Yesterday, Senator Casey met with Dr. Susan Rice, President-elect Obama’s nominee to be the U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations. At the meeting, Senator Casey and Dr. Rice discussed the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Senator Casey also spoke to Dr. Rice about the approach she will bring to the United Nations if she were to be confirmed.
(Press Release, January 8, 2009)

Rep. Bill Cassidy (R-LA)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congressman Bill Cassidy (R–Baton Rouge) issued the following statement in response to Israel’s actions to defend its citizens against continued rocket attacks from Hamas:

“Every nation has the right to defend itself. By responding to Hamas’ rocket attacks, the Israeli government is exercising its fundamental duty to defend the lives of its citizens. The United States would respond similarly if a neighboring country fired thousands of rockets into our cities and towns. I strongly support Israel’s right to self-defense. Lasting peace requires an unconditional commitment from Hamas to stop targeting Israeli civilians.”

In the past two months, Hamas has fired more than 600 rockets at Israel's civilian population. On December 27, the Israeli military began targeting Hamas' combat and munitions facilities, first by air and later by ground.

According to published reports, France and Egypt have made progress in brokering a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, but the hostilities are still ongoing. (*Press Release, January 7, 2009*)

Rep. Kathy Castor (D-FL)

U.S. Representative Kathy Castor: "I'm listening to all sides now, but I have to tell you that once someone begins firing rockets into your home you have a right to respond. I hope they can all work for peace now and turn the corner. It's a difficult situation." (*Public Statement, January 9, 2009*)

Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-GA)

"Madam President, I also wish to discuss the security in the Middle East and to offer my support for Israel . Israel is an important foundation of stability and democracy in the Middle East. The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is important not only to the peace and security of the Middle East but also to the rest of the world.

The United States and Israel share common principles and a strong commitment to eradicate terrorism and to secure a better future for the world. Israel has been a steadfast ally of the United States and, I assure you, the United States will stand ready to assist our friends, the Israelis, to promote peace, defeat terrorism, and prevent hostile countries that sponsor terrorism from obtaining nuclear weapons.

With hopes for peace and a two-state solution, Israel evacuated all of its citizens and soldiers from Gaza in 2005, including the uprooting of homes, schools, and places of worship. Unfortunately and regrettably, following these actions, the Palestinians failed to develop fully the Gaza Strip and voted into power Hamas, a terrorist organization supported by Iran and whose true objective is to eradicate the state of Israel .

Following years where terror groups in Gaza launched rockets at Israel , targeting the Israeli civilian population, it became clear that it was time for action. After Hamas failed to renew its self-imposed cease-fire--one it, frankly, never enforced fully--Israel was forced to take appropriate action to protect her citizens. To that end, Israel has responded appropriately.

The United States-Israel alliance remains more critical than ever as Israel defends her people and works to end the threat posed from terrorist groups on its borders. The United States and Israel face an unprecedented array of shared threats--from Iran developing a nuclear program with unclear intentions and a clear track record of deceit, to the expanding military capabilities of terrorist groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah, which are supported by Iran--and security and stability in the Middle East, especially for our ally Israel , has never been more precarious.

I do hope this conflict will soon come to a peaceful conclusion. Nevertheless--and let me be clear--Israel has every right to defend its citizens while taking precautions, to the extent possible, to spare the civilian population in Gaza and reduce collateral damage.

I urge the people of Gaza to reject Hamas and surrender the terrorists' rockets in the most expedient manner to facilitate ending this necessary action by Israel . Israel remains committed to peace talks with the Palestinian Authority, despite Hamas's constant bombardment of Israel and its ineffective control over the Gaza Strip.

In order to improve the prospects for successful and lasting peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians, it is necessary for all Palestinians to work toward a solution. This cannot be done while Hamas is allowed to rain terror into southern Israel . I encourage the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank to form a legitimate and authoritative body which can speak for all of Palestine, effectuate change, and exercise control over terrorists who reside in their territory. I commend President Abbas for taking part in the international discussions about the situation in Gaza.

I support the necessary requirements of any cease-fire which Secretary Rice discussed before the United Nations. Hamas must end the rocket, mortar, and other attacks on Israel, and Israel can then cease its military offensive and reopen Gaza's border crossings so that Palestinians can benefit from humanitarian goods and basic supplies. Most importantly, the smuggling of weapons into Gaza through hundreds of illegal tunnels must end. The Arab states in the region, especially Egypt, should be a part of this process, and I encourage the Palestinians to seek their guidance and support, and in return for them to offer guidance and political and financial support.” (*Congressional Record, January 8, 2009*)

“Since 1948 and the creation of the nation of Israel, it has been and remains one of the greatest and strongest strategic allies and partners of the United States. Our countries have worked closely together in the areas of national security, economic development, and trade.

Israel is an important foundation of stability and democracy in the Middle East. The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is important not only to the peace and security of the Middle East, but also to the rest of the world.

The United States and Israel share common principles including the strong commitment to eradicate terrorism and secure a better future for the world. Israel has been a steadfast ally of the United States, and I assure you, the U.S. stands ready to assist our friends, the Israelis, to promote peace and defeat terrorism.

Following years where terror groups in Gaza launched rockets at Israel targeting the Israeli civilian population, it became clear it was time for action. After Hamas failed to renew its self imposed cease-fire--one it had never enforced fully--Israel was forced to take appropriate action to protect her citizens.

The United States supports Israel or any nation that is responding to attacks in self defense on its country and its citizens. I do hope that this conflict soon will come to a peaceful conclusion.

Nevertheless, and let me be clear, Israel has every right to defend its citizens while taking necessary precautions to spare the civilian population in Gaza and reduce collateral damage.”
(*Letter to AIPAC, January 7, 2009*)

Rep. Ben Chandler (D-KY)

“Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Israel's enduring friendship with the United States of America, as well as its right to self-defense in an appropriate and proportional manner from the threats posed to it by its neighbors who seek its demise.

As most Palestinians hunger for peace, the actions of Hamas, sponsored by Iran and often attempting to maximize Palestinian civilian casualties, make this road to peace much more difficult. Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, hoping that this withdrawal would usher in peace between the two rivals. However, since 2005 Hamas has fired thousands of rockets into Israel. Over the past 6 weeks alone, Hamas, outside the confines of the ceasefire agreement, fired hundreds of rockets and mortars into Israel without warning, killing men, women and children. These continuous acts of terror have left Israel with no other choice but to defend its citizens.

An important and reliable ally in an unstable region, Israel is fundamental to our foreign policy in the Middle East. I am disappointed to see an end to the 6-month ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, as this ultimately leads to more civilian casualties on both sides. However, I think it is important to recognize that Israel faces great threats along its border from which it has every right to defend itself.

During the 6-month ceasefire, Israel's support of the people of Gaza--such as supplying food, medical and other supplies--was commendable. This assistance highlights the potential for a peaceful resolution to this enduring conflict, which I hope to see in my lifetime.”

(*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Travis Childers (D-MS)

“Madam Speaker, I rise today to affirm that Hamas's continued and violent attacks against Israel have again undermined the potential for peace under already tenuous conditions, harming both Palestinians and Israeli civilians in an unprovoked assault. I join many of my fellow Americans in calling for Hamas to end its attacks, recognize Israel's right to exist, dismantle its terrorist infrastructure, and accept previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians. I was proud to vote last week with a bipartisan majority of my colleagues in support of H. Res. 34, expressing our continued commitment to the welfare and survival of Israel, and recognizing its right to act in self-defense.” (*Congressional Record, January 21, 2009*)

House Majority Whip James Clyburn (D-SC)

“Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support as an original cosponsor of H. Res. 34 , which recognizes Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Hamas terrorists in Gaza and reaffirms the United States' strong support for Israel.

Since Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza in 2005, the Hamas terrorist organization has launched thousands of missile attacks against Israeli civilian targets.

I mourn the loss of life on both sides of this conflict, including the innocent Palestinians who have cynically and deliberately been used by Hamas terrorists as human shields.

In order to end the violence in Gaza, Hamas needs to recognize Israel's right to exist and renounce terror. As the only true democracy in the Middle East, the 111th Congress recognizes Israel's struggle to protect its people, maintain peace with its neighbors, and defend the freedoms of a democratic society.

I encourage all of my colleagues to support this resolution.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK)

“Mr. President, when President Obama is sworn into office next week, he will inherit an extremely complex and challenging crisis in the Middle East. Since Israel commenced military operations in Gaza to defend its citizens against rocket attacks more than 1,000 have died in Gaza, many of them civilians, while 13 Israelis have died. In spite of this carnage, Hamas refuses to surrender and continues to fire rockets into Israel. No clear resolution is in sight.

As a practicing physician, I find this conflict heartbreaking. Israelis live in constant fear that a rocket attack will snuff out an innocent life. Families in Israel go to bed at night wondering if a rocket will slam into their home. At the same time, Palestinians have nowhere to run from a terrorist organization that uses its own civilians as human shields.

While we all mourn the loss of innocent life, the world must recognize that Hamas deliberately created a situation in which Israel was forced to respond as any sovereign nation would while under attack. Israel, and every nation, has the right to self-defense.

What makes Hamas's actions particularly abhorrent and barbaric is the fact that they are making decisions, I believe, based on a perverse political calculation. While publically condemning Israel, Hamas's leaders and sympathizers in Iran and elsewhere privately welcome the suffering of the Palestinian people as a political opportunity. Hamas knows better than anyone that virtually every area of the densely populated Gaza strip is a civilian area. In Gaza, refugees have no place to seek refuge. The terrible unintended consequences and loss of civilian life we've seen in Gaza is part of Hamas's design and goal.

The United States and the next administration can play an important role in preventing Hamas from achieving its goals. What many on both sides long for is not just the cessation of violence but a real, lasting and durable peace. Some believe this is impossible, but it is in the interest of all sides to work toward this goal.

I trust President-elect Obama will avoid the false choice between unapologetically defending Israel's security and creating hope and opportunity for people on both sides of the conflict who want the same degree of freedom, peace and opportunity for themselves and their children. As Israel's most important ally, the United States should never waver in our commitment to Israel's security. The strength of that assurance is itself one of our most important contributions in the region because it creates the security and stability that are a prerequisite for meaningful negotiations.

At the same time, we enhance security in the region by assuring Palestinians in Gaza with our words and actions that they are not forgotten and that we hear their calls for peace and an end to violence. I've delivered 4,000 babies and I grieve with the pregnant women in Gaza who are being turned away at hospitals because their own leaders have held their lives and the lives of their children in contempt. The next administration can legitimize and support those mothers' pleas for peace while condemning and marginalizing Hamas's tactics of terror.

I believe President-elect Obama has the judgment and temperament to not only maintain our vital support of Israel, but to also create hope in the region and help Palestinians embrace alternatives to Hamas's brand of violence and despair. He will have my prayers and support and I hope he can have the prayers and support of the American people as he confronts this difficult challenge.” (*Congressional Record, January 15, 2009*)

Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA)

Fairfax, VA -- Congressman-Elect Gerry Connolly made the following statement today concerning the ongoing security situation in Israel:

“The current tragic circumstances in the Gaza strip were triggered by Hamas' decision not to renew the cease fire with Israel and to resume mortar shelling of Israel proper. Israel has been forced to respond with air strikes to protect and defend innocent civilians exposed to such wanton violence. This relentless cycle of terror and retaliation will not cease until there is clear recognition of the right of Israel to exist within secure borders, at peace with its neighbors. That will require the re-engagement of intense U.S. diplomacy in the region and the willingness of all parties to return to the negotiating table.” (*Press Release, January 3, 2009*)

Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX)

WASHINGTON—U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, made the following statement regarding the current situation in Gaza.

“It is the fundamental right of every sovereign nation to defend itself and its people when attacked by an enemy, Israel’s recent defensive military operations in the Gaza Strip against Hamas have been both warranted and fully justified. Recent actions by Hamas – deliberately targeting innocent civilians for death and destruction and using innocent Palestinians as human shields – have reminded the world that Hamas is nothing more than a terrorist

organization driven by hatred, fear and radical ideology. Hamas continues to stand as a roadblock to peace in the region, and it must be dealt with accordingly.

“Israel is and has been a great friend to the United States, and the Israeli people remain our steadfast allies in the war on terror. Now, more than ever, it is imperative that the United States continue to stand beside Israel as we continue the shared struggle against extremists whose primary objectives are the destruction of both our nations and our shared values of freedom and liberty.” *(Press Release, January 6, 2009)*

Gov. Jon Corzine (D-NJ)

TRENTON - Governor Jon S. Corzine today issued the following statement regarding the current crisis in the Middle East:

“The current crisis in Israel and Gaza reflects a fundamental truth: Violence begets violence. What is happening now in the region underscores two important issues:

“First, all countries around the world have the absolute right and the responsibility to defend themselves against attacks on their people and their sovereignty. Israel has justly asserted that right and responsibility, as any country would, in the face of consistent and recently-increased destructive rocket bombardments against its territory and its citizens by Hamas. Civilized people everywhere must speak out against terrorist acts.

“Second, the breakdown of the Gaza ceasefire and resumption of violence are tragic reminders of the urgency to work toward comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

“Along with people of all backgrounds and faiths, I mourn the loss of innocent life and believe we are compelled by our common humanity to ensure that critical aid and assistance flow unhindered to innocent civilians in Gaza. I hope all parties respond to the urgent needs of the civilian population, and applaud Israel’s decision to open the borders for the life-saving work of United Nations agencies, the Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations.

“I pray the New Year will bring renewed efforts toward peace.” *(Press Release, January 3, 2009)*

Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA)

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today, Congressman Jim Costa (D-Fresno) made the following statement on the situation in Gaza:

“These unprovoked attacks on Israel have shown the world yet again the ultimate goal of Hamas: the destruction of Israel. It is unfortunate that Hamas is not interested in a peace agreement, but rather killing innocent people and forcing Israel to protect herself, while the people of Gaza suffer. It is incumbent now for the rest of the world to act and bring a lasting peace to the region, and ultimately end the violence and destruction. I support Israel’s right to defend itself against these rocket attacks from Gaza, and urge the rest of the world to stand with Israel during this perilous time.”

Costa is a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and serves on the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia. (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Rep. Jerry Costello (D-IL)

“Madam Speaker, for the past several years, Israelis living near Gaza have endured a continual state of fear due to the thousands of rocket attacks launched from there by Hamas. When the six-month cease fire between Hamas and Israel recently ended, Hamas responded almost immediately by firing more than 70 missiles at civilian targets within Israel. On December 27th, Israel, in an act of self defense, struck at Hamas targets in Gaza in response to these continued attacks, and I want to express my strong support for Israel's right of self-defense.

Israel has taken meaningful steps in recent years to push the peace process forward, including unilaterally withdrawing from Gaza in 2005. Unfortunately, Hamas has not met Israel's efforts towards a peaceful coexistence, and has instead increased military operations against its neighbor and continues to deny Israel's right to exist.

These unfortunate developments are tragic, but have been precipitated by Hamas' aggression. Hamas must stop the rocket attacks and all parties in the region need to commit to renewing efforts at peace. The U.S. should remain involved in the peace process and I will continue to work with my colleagues in Congress towards this goal.” (*Congressional Record, January 7, 2009*)

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Congressman Jerry Costello (D-IL) issued the following statement regarding Israel's recent military action in Gaza:

“For the past several years, Israelis living near Gaza have endured a continual state of fear due to the thousands of rocket attacks launched from there by Hamas. When the six-month cease fire between Hamas and Israel recently ended, Hamas responded almost immediately by firing more than 70 missiles at civilian targets within Israel. On December 27th, Israel, in an act of self defense, struck at Hamas targets in Gaza in response to these continued attacks, and I want to express my strong support for Israel's right of self-defense.

“Israel has taken meaningful steps in recent years to push the peace process forward, including unilaterally withdrawing from Gaza in 2005. Unfortunately, Hamas has not met Israel's efforts towards a peaceful coexistence, and has instead increased military operations against its neighbor and continues to deny Israel's right to exist.

“These unfortunate developments are tragic, but have been precipitated by Hamas' aggression. Hamas must stop the rocket attacks and all parties in the region need to commit to renewing efforts at peace. The U.S. should remain involved in the peace process and I will continue to work with my colleagues in Congress towards this goal.” (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Rep. Ander Crenshaw (R-FL)

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) -- “Since seizing power in Gaza two years ago, Hamas has consistently escalated its confrontation with Israel. They have constructed a sophisticated military infrastructure, smuggled in longer-range missiles, and regularly violated a truce negotiated in June 2008. Hamas recently launched hundreds of rockets into southern Israel, and in response, Israel acted to protect its citizens from further terrorist attacks.

“Israel's response to Hamas was necessary, appropriate, and focused on the military capabilities of Hamas. Additionally, Israel targeted associated personnel and facilities used in planning and conducting attacks on Israeli civilians.

“Unfortunately, Hamas has mingled its political and military infrastructure throughout Gaza. This strategy has led to the unavoidable loss of innocent lives and I am saddened by the civilian casualties.

“Hamas is responsible for the current situation in the region and only Hamas can end the crisis by adopting an immediate cease fire and ending the attacks on innocent Israelis.”
(Press Release, January 6, 2009)

Rep. Joseph Crowley (D-NY)

“Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my overwhelming support for Israel’s right to defend her people against terrorist attacks.

Over the past six months, we have seen a relative calm between Israelis and Palestinians due to an Egyptian brokered cease-fire.

Unfortunately, however, this calm was used by Hamas to rearm themselves with more technologically-advanced rockets and weapons, which were smuggled through tunnels from Egypt and over the Syrian border.

When the cease-fire expired on December 19, 2008, Hamas refused to extend it and began to fire its updated arsenal of rockets deep into Southern Israel.

Sadly, rocket fire is nothing new to the Israelis, who have seen 6000 rockets land in Southern Israel since unilaterally withdrawing from Gaza in 2005.

Hamas had a choice this past December – extend the cease-fire or continue hostilities. They chose war over peace.

Israel was forced by Hamas’s action to make a choice too, either live with the threat of rocket fire against her people or take action to keep its people safe from harm. They made the choice any reasonable nation would make – to defend its citizens.

It is time for the Palestinians in Gaza to have better representation – representation that puts the peoples’ well-being before Hamas’s unachievable goals.

The U.S. Congress and the people of the United States will not allow a terrorist organization, like Hamas, to destroy the thriving democracy that is Israel.

We stand with Israel and her goal of peace.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

“I stand with Israel as she defends her people in the south against a constant barrage of rocket fire from Hamas and other terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip. Hamas must renew the truce and end its self destructive actions against the Palestinians living under their control.” (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Rep. John Culberson (R-TX)

“I do not believe that the United States has a stronger ally in the Middle East than Israel. Israel gained the West Bank and other occupied territories in response to attacks on its borders, and had a right to defend itself under normal terms of war. I believe that criminals who use violence to achieve their ends deserve any type of similar reprisal. Finally, Palestinian leadership must show that they are serious about stopping terrorist attacks by Hamas against Israel so the Middle East peace process can move forward.” (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-MD)

“We cannot realize peace between Israelis and Palestinians as long as Hamas is launching daily rocket and mortar attacks provoking Israel into exercising self-defense. Hamas must end this most recent front of aggression immediately. Just as previous attacks have not led to resolution, these most recent attacks will only drive both parties further from finding a common ground.” (*Press Release, January 6, 2009*)

Rep. Artur Davis (D-AL)

“While the reins of American power are about to change hands, one constant will remain; the United States will defend Israel's right of self-defense against its sworn enemies,” said Congressman Davis.

“Israel finds itself under constant fire from a terrorist faction known as Hamas and Israel's campaign to dismantle Hamas's offensive capability is justified,” added the congressman. “The path to lasting peace in the Middle East lies, as it always has, with Israel's Palestinian neighbors accepting Israel's right to exist and renouncing violence against Israel.” (*Press Release, January 10, 2009*)

Rep. Geoff Davis (R-KY)

Washington, DC— Congressman Geoff Davis issued the following statement on the situation in Gaza:

“The citizens of Israel have the right to defend themselves against the repeated attacks on their country. Despite Israel’s voluntary withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, Hamas continues to instigate violence in the region. The United States must engage diplomatically and encourage all parties involved to achieve a peaceful end to the cycle of violence. Our nation’s involvement in this conflict cannot wait pending the transition of our government. I encourage President Bush and President-elect Obama to immediately join together to facilitate a diplomatic solution that will assure the security of Israel.

“In 2007, while visiting Israel, I met with victims of Hamas rocket attacks. Clearly, Hamas has targeted civilians to draw Israel into retaliation. For Hamas to achieve a lasting peace, they must be willing to revoke their commitment to destroy Israel and control the provocations of their militias. Tragically, innocents on both sides have been caught in the middle of this struggle.” (*Press Release, January 6, 2009*)

Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA)

“Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of Israel's right to self-defense and a broader U.S. diplomatic role in the Middle East. The Israeli government has a right and a responsibility to defend Israeli citizens, and we have an obligation to support our ally in times of crisis.

But this body also has an obligation to advance the dialogue beyond the conflict of today toward how we can achieve a stable peace in the future. This conflict shows that the United States cannot manage the situation from the sidelines.

This approach only serves Iran and radical elements in the region. Rather, we must maintain a high diplomatic presence that allows responsible parties to capture every opportunity for peace.

I believe that the new administration and the new Congress represent an opportunity to regain our position as an honest broker in the region. For this to happen, the tone coming from Washington must be in sharp contrast to the last 8 years.

Congress helped set that tone, which is where I hope my colleagues will use this tragedy as an opportunity to call for an end to this conflict and a broader, American, diplomatic presence in the region.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Charlie Dent (R-PA)

U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent (PA-15) today issued the following statement concerning the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip:

“The events leading up to the recent Israeli airstrikes in Gaza are the responsibility of the reckless, terrorist leaders of Hamas. Regrettably, innocent civilians have been killed in Gaza, and that is, in part, a consequence of Hamas using civilians and their homes as storage sites and launching pads for their unguided missile attacks.

“Many of the individuals and organizations who are protesting Israel's actions today never uttered a word of protest or condemnation over Hamas' rocket attacks against the innocent people of Sderot and other Israeli communities, including rockets that hit private homes, schools and shopping centers. Hamas has been raining Qassam rockets down on Israel starting before the Gaza disengagement in August 2005. The Israeli government has responded to the persistent, unrelenting attacks against Israeli civilians as a way to disable Hamas' capacity to further inflict harm and terror on Israeli civilians.

“Ideally, a sustainable ceasefire by Hamas and Israel would be a logical, desirable, outcome in the short term to the current situation. Unfortunately, since the disengagement, Hamas has never ceased the rocket attacks. It is past time that Hamas renounce terrorism and recognize Israel's right to exist within defensible borders.” (*Press Release, January 8, 2009*)

Sen. Jim DeMint (R-SC)

“I'm deeply troubled by the recent rocket and mortar attacks on Israel launched by Hamas. No one should have to live in constant fear and no sovereign nation can stand by while their citizens are attacked daily by terrorists.

Years ago, Israel controlled Gaza and surrendered authority over the area in order to broker a better peace. In exchange, Israel has patiently waited for Hamas to renounce its violent ways, act responsibly, recognize Israel's right to exist, and come to the negotiating table. However, it is clear Hamas has no intention of living peacefully with Israel. With an unwillingness to move forward, Israel has every right to take the necessary steps to protect and defend its citizens and target those who preach hate and violence.

Israelis and Palestinians both deserve to live in peace, and I have always hoped a safe and secure Israel could live side by side with a sovereign and peaceful Palestine. Through their actions, members of Hamas have made it clear the organization is nothing more than a mouth piece and aggressive arm of the Iranians that cannot act independently for the benefit of the Palestinian people. Hamas must renounce violence and act as an honest broker. If it does not, it will be the responsibility of every nation in the Middle East to shut down the long supply lines of rockets, bullets and bombs that run from Iran to Hamas in Gaza.” (*Press Release, January 6, 2009*)

State Sen. Ted Deutch (D-FL)

Tallahassee, FL- The Florida Senate on Friday threw its support behind one of our most important allies, unanimously passing a bi-partisan resolution in support of the state of Israel.

SR 66A, sponsored by Sen. Ted Deutch (D-Boca Raton) expresses solidarity with Israel and support of its right to defend itself from Hamas attacks. The resolution, sponsored in the House by Majority Leader Adam Hasner, reaffirms Florida's commitment to those who fight terrorists around the world.

“I am honored by the overwhelming support of my colleagues in both the House and Senate. Israel has a right to defend herself at a time when it has endured consistent rocket attacks by

Hamas. We must stand tall, together, in support of Israel's actions to defend and protect her citizens," said Sen. Deutch.

The vote comes on the heels of the passage of a Congressional resolution calling for an immediate cease fire in Gaza, but also voicing support of the right of Israel to defend itself. *(Press Release, January 9, 2009)*

Reps. Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL) and Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL)

"Israel has the right defend itself. The terrorist group known as " Hamas" has launched countless deadly attacks on Israeli civilians from its sanctuary in Gaza. Israel is acting at this time to stop " Hamas" from being able to continue to attack Israel's civilian population. Israel is absolutely justified in defending herself and in taking all necessary military steps to guarantee the safety and security of its people. Israel has our full support as it acts to defend itself." *(Press Release, December 30, 2008)*

Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-CT)

"I fully support Israel's right to defend itself from rockets aimed at innocent Israeli civilians, fired by Hamas militants in Gaza. Hamas must end its support for and involvement in terrorist attacks against Israel. But there is no military solution to the conflict. I support the efforts of the Bush Administration to press both sides to accept an interim truce, and I am committed to working with the Obama Administration in using all of America's diplomatic might to bring both sides to the negotiating table so that Israelis and Palestinians can finally live side by side in peace." *(Press Release, January 5, 2009)*

Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) released the following statement today, on the deteriorating situation in Gaza.

"I understand and support Israel's defense of its borders from rocket attacks by Hamas.

This defense has led to an escalation of violence and more death and suffering by innocent people on both sides. This crisis can only end with a ceasefire and honest negotiations for peace.

The Palestinian people deserve leadership that is committed to bringing an end to this violence." *(Press Release, December 31, 2008)*

Rep. Chet Edwards (D-TX)

(Washington D.C) – U.S. Representative Chet Edwards released the following statement:

“Despite Israel’s complete withdrawal of all of its soldiers and settlements from Gaza in 2005, an effort aimed at reducing violence and improving relations with the Palestinians, Hamas has continued to launch thousands of rocket attacks at innocent Israeli citizens.

“No country should be expected to endure constant rocket and mortar fire on its own soil. Israel has every right to defend itself against these attacks by initiating military actions in Gaza.” (*Press Release, January 5, 2009*)

Rep. Eliot Engel (D-NY)

“Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the resolution. I support the right of democratic Israel to defend itself against terrorism by Hamas.

We know that missiles have been raining down on Israel, more than 7,000 in the past few years, and that the Palestinians, Hamas, are using its people as human shields. We say to Hamas you will not be allowed to use terrorism as a negotiating tool. The hypocrisy of the negotiating community and the U.N. and demonstrators around the world, we say to those people, you will not hold Israel to a different standard than any other country when it comes to protecting the safety of its citizens.

To those who say that Israel is using disproportionate force, is it disproportionate to want to protect your citizens from terrorist attacks? We want to see two states, a Palestinian state and an Israeli state, living side by side, a Jewish-Israeli state, an Arab-Palestinian state. We want to see that. Hamas does not, Israel does.

There are three things that Hamas needs to do before it is a player in the international community. It needs to recognize the right of Israel to exist. It needs to abide by previous agreements signed by the Palestinians, and it needs to reject terrorism as a negotiating tool.

There is strong and bipartisan support in this Congress for the democratic State of Israel, and we stand by Israel when it has tried to defend its citizens from being attacked by terrorism. That is why we have bipartisan support, and that is why the United States will always stand with the democratic nation of Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

“Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon in support of the beleaguered people of the State of Israel. I rise in support of the only democracy in the Middle East. I rise in support of the country in the Middle East that has the same values that our great country, the United States of America, has, principles of democracy and principles that are so important to every man, woman and child.

The people of Israel have for 60 years been vilified by undemocratic powers and by powers that would wish to destroy it. For the past several years, day in and day out the people of Israel have had to endure rocket attacks coming from the terrorist organization that runs Gaza called Hamas. Israel is supposed to just accept these attacks on its citizens and do little or nothing about it if you would listen to the United Nations, if you would listen to the

international community, if you would listen to these hypocritical demonstrations going on in London and all the Arab capitals and everywhere else, and even some in the United States.

Every country, every government's primary responsibility is to protect its citizens, and the people of Israel and the Government of Israel should not be held to any other standard than that.

The terrorist organization that runs Gaza called Hamas, bought and paid for by Iran, thinking that it can use terrorism as a way of somehow getting its state, must understand that in order to gain acceptance of nations in the free world, that it needs to renounce terror, that it needs to recognize Israel's right to exist, and that it needs to abide by all previous resolutions that were signed by the Palestinian Authority. It doesn't do it because it's a terrorist state. It doesn't do it because its vow is to destroy the Jewish State of Israel. It doesn't do it because, like Hezbollah and like Osama bin Laden and like al Qaeda, it thinks it can use terrorism to establish its aims and goals, but it cannot.

We stand in a bipartisan fashion with the people of Israel because if we in the United States had missiles being fired onto our innocent civilians from states across the border, we would move across the border and try to stop those terrorists from killing our people. That's what Israel is doing.

Many of us on the Foreign Affairs Committee this morning met with the Israeli ambassador and we saw a tape where Israel takes great precaution to try to prevent civilian casualties. But what Hamas does is it builds its bomb factories and it builds its terror weapons in the heart of the densely populated areas of Gaza and uses its own people as human shields. And so when the Israelis destroy these missile-making and bomb-making terror factories, innocent civilians very unfortunately get killed. But it is the Palestinians that support Hamas. It's the Hamas organization that is responsible for these killings. Israel has an absolute right to defend itself.

Now, we all want a cease-fire. We all want peace in the region. And we all know that ultimately peace will come when there is a two-state solution, an Israeli Jewish state and a Palestinian Arab state. The problem is most Israelis do accept the fact that there ought to be a Palestinian state, but the Palestinians, Hamas, does not accept the viability of Israel as a Jewish state.

And so let's put things in perspective here. If you have people that want to destroy you and want to kill you and don't recognize your right to exist, how can we have peace in the region?

We ought to note that Israel pulled out of Gaza several years ago and left Gaza to the Palestinians. And what did it get in return? It got missiles fired on its citizens in Syrot and other places in return for Israel leaving Gaza. The Palestinians used to say, well, it's the occupation, that's what drives everything. What occupation is there in Gaza? There is none. Israel has left Gaza. And the people of Gaza could have built a democratic government living in peace with its neighbors; instead, they chose to embrace terrorism and try to kill as many Israelis as they can.

So, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, let me say that support for Israel in this Congress is strong and it is bipartisan and will remain so because we understand that the democratic nation of

Israel has a right to exist, and the government of Israel has a right to protect its citizens.”
(*Congressional Record, January 7, 2009*)

“I stand firmly with Israel as it exercises its right of self-defense against the terrorist group, Hamas. Israel has done everything it could to avert war in the face of a constant rocket barrage from the Hamas terrorists in Gaza. It was Hamas that ended the six-month ceasefire after Israel urged that it continue. It was Hamas that ignored Israel’s warnings that the continued rocket assault would bring a response. Approximately 3,000 rockets and mortars landed on southern Israel this year alone. The world must stand with Israel as it rightfully acts to protect the security of its citizens against the Gaza-based terrorists. Israel is legitimately defending its people and its sovereignty.”

Facts:

- In the last eight years, more than 10,000 rockets and mortars have been fired at Israel from Gaza.
- Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza in September 2005.
- Since Hamas’ violent takeover of Gaza in June 2007, the frequency of rocket attacks rose 150% to more than 250 rockets and mortars per month.
- In 2008 alone, approximately 3,000 rockets and mortars of increasing range have been launched at southern Israeli cities.
- Arab leaders, including Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit, urged Hamas to continue the ceasefire and have blamed Hamas for instigating the crisis.

Rep. Eliot L. Engel is a senior member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and a member of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia. In 2008, he was the lead Democratic sponsor of a resolution condemning Palestinian rocket attacks on Israeli civilians by Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations which passed the House of Representatives on March 5, 2008 by a vote of 404-1. (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Sen. John Ensign (R-NV)

Washington, D.C. – Senator John Ensign issued this statement in response to the continuation of attacks by Hamas on civilian targets in Israel:

“The right of the people of Israel to defend themselves is not negotiable. Leaders around the world should join together and call on Hamas to stop their civilian-aimed attacks immediately, and Israel will respond accordingly. My thoughts and prayers are with the innocent victims—on both sides—of Hamas’ reign of terror.” (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Rep. Mary Fallin (R-OK)

Washington, DC -- Congresswoman Mary Fallin (OK-05) released the following statement regarding the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas:

“In the wake of a series of deadly terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas, Israel is now exercising its right to defend itself. As long as Hamas continues to fire rockets and mortars into Israel, targeting civilians and seeking to sow general terror and chaos, they are acting as an aggressor. Hamas started this conflict, and they can end it, by ceasing its attacks on the Israeli people. Until they do so, the Israeli government has every right to respond militarily to a terrorist threat.” (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Rep. John Fleming (R-LA)

Shreveport, LA - Congressman-elect John Fleming issued the following statement today regarding Israel's response to the attacks of Hamas.

“In the past few days, Hamas has targeted Southern Israel with rockets and mortars, threatening the lives of nearly 400,000 civilian men, women and children. In response, Israel responded with forceful action to stop this terrorist threat. Israel has tried to find a peaceful solution and even agreed to a six-month cease-fire with Hamas. During that time, Israel facilitated the transfer into Gaza of more than 14,000 trucks, 185,000 tons of foods and other supplies, more than 7,000 tons of heating gas and more than 10 million gallons of fuel. Hamas used the six-month calm to increase its rocket and other weapons capabilities by smuggling arms into Gaza from Egypt. I firmly stand behind Israel and their response to Hamas to protect the lives of the Israeli people and limit the loss of civilian casualties. Israel, like any other sovereign nation, has the right to self-defense.”

Congressman-elect Fleming will be sworn in on January 6, 2009. (*Press Release, January 5, 2009*)

Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC)

“The main goal of any democratic nation is to ensure the safety and prosperity of its people.

As we all know, Israel has commenced defensive military actions in Gaza aimed at disrupting Hamas' weaponizing capabilities which are being used to terrorize Israeli civilians. Unlike the indiscriminate rocket attacks launched by Hamas, Israel's precision strikes are a defensive last resort necessary to protect her people.

Considering that since Israel's 2005 withdrawal from Gaza Hamas, with the help of Iran, has openly fired more than 6,300 rockets and mortars at Israeli population centers with more than 1,000 of these having been fired within the past month, it's clear that the Israeli Government is taking a measured response that any other responsible country would expect to take in defending its sovereignty. I think that we have to do everything that we possibly can in this country to lend our support to Israel in her defense of the people of Israel, and I want to lend my support to this resolution.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA)

“It is important to remember that the current conflict in Gaza comes after a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from that area. Tragically, this was followed by a takeover by Hamas, which is dedicated to Israel’s destruction, and has constantly used Gaza as a base for physical attacks on Israel and Israelis.

This use of Gaza as a base from which to attack Israel left Israel with no choice except self defense, particularly after Hamas refused to continue the imperfectly observed ceasefire, and made clear its intention to resume attacks.

As it exercises this right of self defense, it is important for Israel to make clear its willingness to accept a genuine ceasefire - meaning an end to attacks from Gaza, and also Israel’s continuing commitment to a two state solution negotiated with Palestinians genuinely committed to that goal.” (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Rep. Trent Franks (R-AZ)

“Madam Speaker, the most fundamental purpose for any government is its national defense and the protection of its citizens. I stand here today in heartfelt support for Israel and for its right to defend its innocent citizens from the attacks of a relentless enemy that seeks its destruction. The conflict unfolding in Israel's heartland today is not unfamiliar to the Israeli people.

Since its establishment in 1948, the tiny State of Israel --22 of which would fit into our State of California--has faced enemies on every side that openly oppose its right to exist and work actively to bring about its destruction.

Indeed, Israel has never known a reality where its very existence was not threatened by this insidious ideology called jihad; an ideology so sinister as to make men and women leap for joy at killing their own children in order to be able to kill the children of others, whether that means flying commercial airplanes into the World Trade Center or sending a Qassam rocket into the side of a bus carrying small school children in Israel .

Madam Speaker, in Imperial China, there was a terrible form of execution known as death by a thousand cuts. It was an unspeakably cruel demonstration meant to terrify observers into submissions. Israel is fighting to stop the “death by a thousand cuts” strategy used by Hamas to inflict constant, incessant destruction and terror on the Israeli citizens; and the nation of Israel has acted nobly for the sake of innocent Israelis, as well as innocent Palestinian civilians to justly refuse to allow the bloodletting to continue.

Hamas was designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the United States in 1995. And it is a known proxy of the Iranian regime which openly seeks to see Israel wiped from the face of the Earth. The governing charter of Hamas openly calls for the destruction of the State of Israel , with the goal of raising the banner of jihad over every square inch of the State of Israel .

And still, Madam Speaker, time after time, Israel has acted in good faith and has extended gestures of goodwill towards its Palestinian neighbors and Hamas, including its complete disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005 and its commitment to target only military installations of its enemies despite the routine attacks against its own women and children on almost a daily basis.

Madam Speaker, in all of its conflicts, Israel seeks to minimize civilian casualties; Hamas has sought to maximize them. Hamas has broken every cease-fire agreement and every honorable rule of war by deliberately embedding their terrorist militants and weapons caches in the homes of private citizens, and in schools, and in hospitals, and mosques; and Hamas has repeatedly used innocent Palestinian civilians as human shields while they deliberately target Israeli civilians.

There is no moral equivalence here, Madam Speaker. Hamas and Israel are guided by two completely opposite philosophies: One is committed to equality and human dignity under God, and one is committed to a totalitarian ideology of hatred and intolerance; one is devoted to protecting innocent human life, and one commands its destruction.

When a cease-fire agreement was reached between Israel and Hamas last June, Hamas used that opportunity to build up its stockpiles of rockets and weapons that now threaten approximately one million Israelis. And now, Madam Speaker, in a struggle for peace and survival, Israel is once again forced to carry out defensive action against Hamas in order to stop the terrorizing of its innocent civilians.

And once again, once again, Madam Speaker, certain members of the international community are calling on Israel to "exercise restraint."

Madam Speaker, if 6,000 rockets had fallen on an American city over a space of four years, what would we say to anyone who called upon us to restrain ourselves in the effort to protect our own citizens? If those same members of the international community who so harshly criticize Israel for the defensive actions had to suffer for 1 week--just 1 week--under these indiscriminate incessant attacks against their families and their loved ones as Israel has done for decades, Madam Speaker, I would submit that the layers of Hamas would have been made ashes once and for all long ago.

Madam Speaker, Charles Krauthammer recently wrote in the Washington Post something I wish every world leader could understand. He said, "Some geopolitical conflicts are morally complicated. The Israeli-Gaza war is not. It possesses a moral clarity not only rare, but excruciating."

Madam Speaker, I could not agree with those words more.

If the beleaguered Jewish people have learned anything in their struggles for survival over the millennia against enemies who have sought their complete annihilation, it is, as one Holocaust survivor said, "When someone says they intend to kill you, believe them."

Madam Speaker, consider some of the things that terrorist enemies of Israel have said they intend to do to Israel .

Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah stated, “We have discovered how to hit the Jews where they are most vulnerable. The Jews love life, so that is what we shall take from them. We will win because the Jews love life, and we love death.”

Wael al-Zarad, a Hamas Cleric, said, “As Muslims, our blood vengeance against them will only subside with their annihilation

And Egyptian Cleric Safwat Higazi gave this mandate to jihadists on Hamas television. He said, “We say to you: Dispatch those sons of apes and pigs to the Hellfire on the wings of the Qassam rockets. Jihad is our path

Madam Speaker, those are horrifying words even when we hear them here in the safe enclaves of our own homes and work places of America. But for the people of Israel , such words mean terror and death.

Madam Speaker, America's enemies and Israel's enemies in this war are the same. Both of us face the reality of radical Islamic jihadists who would see our nations wiped from the face of the Earth if they could. Both of our nations have been struck deeply, and Israel , in its case, has been repeatedly, by any stretch of imagination, has been struck by this same ideology time and time again; the same ideology that murdered Olympic athletes in 1972, that took American hostages in Iran, that murdered Marines in their barracks in 1993, that bombed the World Trade Center in 1993, that bombed Riyadh in 1995, the Khobar Towers in 1996, the embassy in 1998, the USS *Cole* in 2000. And then, Madam Speaker, this murderous, hellish ideology massacred nearly 3,000 Americans on September 11.

And this enemy makes little distinction between those who support Israel and Israel itself, and for that reason, Madam Speaker, we must realize that an attack on Israel is an attack on America and freedom itself.

Listen to the words of Sheikh Ahmad Bahr, acting speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council. He said, “Allah willing, America and Israel will be annihilated

Madam Speaker, any policy of the United Nations or the United States must articulate three concepts as prerequisites reached to any agreements reached between Israel and Hamas. First, it must reject any moral equivalence between the goals of Hamas and Israel. Secondly, it must place the blame for this current conflict squarely on the shoulders of Hamas, and third, it must clearly restate that America's commitment to the State of Israel remains unshakable.

We stand with Israel not as Republicans, Madam Speaker, not as Democrats, but as Americans and fellow members of the human family, equal heirs of those unalienable gifts of God we call life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; these basic human freedoms. We stand with the innocent people of Israel who have been terrorized on a daily basis, some for as long as they can remember. And we also, Madam Speaker, stand with those courageous Palestinian souls who also long for freedom and peace with their Israeli neighbors.

Madam Speaker, President Harry Truman, who formally recognized the State of Israel only 11 minutes after Israel had declared its independence, said, "I had faith in Israel before it was established, I have faith in it now. I believe it has a glorious future before it--not just another sovereign nation, but as an embodiment of the great ideals of our civilization."

Madam Speaker, we recognize those words to be true and believe that the cause of liberty will prevail in the land of Israel as it has so many times before and that Israel indeed does have a glorious future before it.

Throughout its history, the hand of God has been upon Israel , and today we join in the solidarity with the State of Israel , and its people, with the innocent Palestinians, and with all of who love peace, and we pray for the peace of Jerusalem." (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Arizona Congressman Trent Franks believes the United States should support Israel in its current fight with Hamas in Gaza.

"There's an old Abrahamic covenant that says, 'I will bless those who bless Israel and curse those who curse it,' and so I feel pretty confident it's a good idea to be on Israel's side," Franks said Sunday night on News/Talk 92-3 KTAR's "Jay Lawrence Show."

Franks, a Republican, added that Israel "is very much like we are and, if we turn our back on Israel, I believe that the equation will be so bad for America, so bad for the world, that we simply don't understand." (*Interview on KTAR's Jay Lawrence Show, December 28, 2008*)

Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ)

With Rep. Frelinghuysen's strong support, the House of Representatives this week approved House Resolution 34 regarding the current military conflict in Gaza. The measure:

Expresses support for and commitment to Israel and recognizes its right to self-defense.

Reiterates that Hamas must end the rocket attacks against Israel and verifiably dismantle its terrorist infrastructure.

Encourages the Administration to work to support a ceasefire in Gaza that prevents Hamas from retaining terrorist infrastructure.

Expresses condolences to innocent Palestinian and Israeli victims and their families.

Calls on all nations to condemn Hamas for embedding fighters and weapons among civilian populations and lays blame for the casualties in Gaza on Hamas.

Calls on Egypt to intensify its efforts to halt smuggling between Egypt and Gaza.

Calls for the immediate release of kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

Reiterates support for a sustainable, two-state resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“The genesis of this current conflict is clear: 6,500 rockets and mortars have been fired indiscriminately by Hamas from Gaza into Israel since 2005,” said Frelinghuysen.

“Israel has an absolute right to defend itself from a terrorist organization whose stated goal is destruction of the State of Israel. As recently as last week, Hamas leader Fathi Hammad declared ‘We will not rest until we destroy the Zionist entity.’”

“Of course, I recognize the horrors of war. There is no doubt that the suffering is great on both sides,” he said. “That is precisely why we must support negotiations that will bring about an acceptable and sustainable cease fire as soon as possible.” (*Press Release, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Marcia Fudge (D-OH)

“The United States must stand in support of Israel, its ally, as it defends its citizens against the ongoing violence and terror directed against it by Hamas. Israel has the right and the duty to protect its citizens. By rejecting repeated overtures for peaceful co-existence with Israel, Hamas has put its own people at risk. Innocent Palestinians should not be punished because of the failings of their leaders. I hope and I am prayerful that all parties involved, with help from America’s leaders, can find a way to end the violence so all people in the region can finally know peace.” (*Press Statement, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Elton Gallegly (R-CA)

“These are the facts:

Israel is a sovereign state and a member in good standing in the international community with a recognized right to defend itself.

Hamas is a terrorist organization.

After Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005, Israel exercised uncommon restraint while Hamas fired more than 6,500 rockets into Israel from Gaza.

Israel respected the subsequent six-month cease-fire between Israel and Hamas. Hamas did not. Then, since the cease-fire ended Dec. 19, Hamas has fired hundreds of rockets into Israel.

Hamas’ rockets have no guidance system to speak of. They are launched into civilian cities to indiscriminately kill civilians.

Last year, I traveled to Sderot, Israel, the principal city then under siege from Hamas rockets fired from Gaza, to see firsthand the devastation by the rocket attacks. Just hours before I arrived in Sderot, an 8-year-old boy lost both his legs to a Hamas rocket. Sderot has no political or military importance. As Hamas has acquired rockets with a longer range, other civilian targets in Israel have come under attack.

Hamas fires its rockets from schools, mosques and other civilian targets to guarantee Palestinian civilians will be killed in the event Israel decided to retaliate, even firing rockets from buildings Palestinian citizens have sought as shelter. Hamas uses its citizens as human shields. Their blood is on Hamas' hands.

Despite Hamas' disdain for human life, Israel has been diligent in avoiding civilian casualties as much as possible. Civilian casualties are a tragic repercussion of any military action, but Israel has taken pains to minimize them. Precision airstrikes hit Hamas targets. Palestinian civilians in the targeted areas have been warned ahead of time as much as is feasible. Israel's care has been rewarded. According to preliminary U.N. assessments, 80 percent of those killed before the ground campaign was launched were Hamas.

Given those facts, there is a right and a wrong in this conflict. No one favors war. But, given that a nation has a right to protect itself from attacks, Israel is right and the terrorists are wrong, as terrorists always are.

In addition to traveling to Sderot, I discussed ongoing U.S.-Israeli relations and Israel's security with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and other Israeli officials. I also traveled to the West Bank to discuss Palestinian security and a Palestinian state with Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. He is, I believe, a reasonable and honorable man doing his best to protect the Palestinian people, a task made formidable by Hamas' continuing terrorism.

Hamas does not represent the future of Palestine. It is, instead, a tool of Iran, which has been supplying Hamas with the longer-range rockets that can strike deeper into Israel. Palestine's true allies can help bring about peace. Egypt, in particular, could help the peace process by closing down the smuggling corridor between Gaza and Egypt. Tunnels built by Hamas and other criminal elements are used to smuggle supplies and arms from inside Egypt.

Israel has targeted the tunnels as part of its military operation, but once the fighting stops, Hamas undoubtedly would quickly reconstruct them. While it may not be feasible to find and bury all the tunnels, Egypt could set up inspection stations on the surface roads leading to Gaza, which would severely curtail, if not shut down, the smuggling operation. Hamas' destruction is a critical element for peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Like al-Qaida, Islamic Jihad and other terrorist organizations, Hamas has no constructive purpose, has no respect for the rule of law and no respect for human life. Peace will only come when terrorism is defeated." (*Ventura County Star, January 8, 2009*)

Rep. Scott Garrett (R-NJ)

"About three Augusts ago, a little over that, 3 1/2 years ago, I was part of a congressional delegation that was on the border between the Gaza and Israel as the Israeli military was removing the last Israeli settlers from the Gaza. As you can imagine, Congressman, it was a very painful thing to watch, seeing families being torn apart, taken away from the lands that they had settled, where nothing had existed before they created their settlements, being taken from their neighbors and the villages that they created, truly oases in the desert, was hurtful. But I understood why the Israelis did it. They unilaterally withdrew from the Gaza with the

hope that turning that land back to the Palestinians would have the desired effect of bringing peace to that area.

Rather than the peace that the Israelis had hoped for, the Palestinians, particularly when Hamas took over, became not an area where one would build schools and homes and infrastructure and demonstrate to the world that the Palestinian people were able to create a state of their own, rather than demonstrating to the world that they were capable of self-governance, quite the opposite became the very harsh reality. And what you saw, instead of schools being built and neighborhoods flourishing and businesses being built and infrastructure, hospitals, basic services for the Palestinian people, what happened instead was that the Gaza became a launch pad for a reign of terror upon the Israeli people that lived on the other side of the border.

Rather than reaching out to the Israeli people in an attempt to forge a peaceful relationship between the two peoples, the Gaza has become a hellhole. It's become a hellhole for the Palestinian people, and it is a hellhole for the people of Israel because they are continually barraged by rockets well within the Israeli border.

How many rockets are we talking about? You demonstrated it with your graph. We're talking 2 rockets, 10 rockets, a misfiring? We're talking about 7,000 rockets in the course of a few years. Who can exist, what peoples, what Nation would tolerate that type of continuous assault on their innocent population? There is not one country on the planet that would not respond. And yet with all the panic and the fear and the damage, the psychological damage, and the physical injuries and damage and the death that these rockets have caused, the Israeli people did not, did not, attack back. But at some point any government worth its weight in salt must defend its people, and that is exactly what Israel has done.

Let me share a story with you, Mr. *Weiner*. A few years ago, I was talking to one of the Middle East ambassadors. And I said to him, Is there no way for you and your government to intervene and tell Hamas, ask Hamas, demand Hamas to stop launching Qassam rockets against the Israeli people?

And his response to me incredibly, when he shrugged his shoulders, it was, Well, the Qassam rockets are very inaccurate.

And I responded to the ambassador, They may be inaccurate unless one falls on your head, and then it's very accurate. It's deadly accurate.

But he shrugged and he said, Well, it's no big deal.

Well, it's a big deal if you're an Israeli and your child was just killed in their school by a Qassam rocket being launched by Hamas from the Gaza. This simply must stop.

But I went further, and I once spoke with the Egyptian ambassador. And I said to him, Mr. Ambassador, is there no way for you and the Egyptian Government to find those tunnels and blow them up so that the flow of arms being supplied mostly by Iran will stop, will cease the flow so that Hamas will not have a ready supply of rockets to be using against the Israeli people?

And again I got another shrug: We don't know where they are. We can't identify them.

I said, The Israelis gave you a list. They know exactly where the tunnels are. You can't blow up those tunnels and prevent the death of innocent Israeli children?

I got no response.

Where was the outrage of the United Nations? Where was the outrage of the people throughout the world that are rioting now in their countries when Israeli children were being killed by Hamas' continuing barrage of rockets? Not a one that I can remember. Not one that I've seen on TV. Not one speech in the United Nations. Not one moment of outrage. It was Israeli children that were being killed and a very patient Israeli Government trying to use every diplomatic tool at their disposal before they had to go in. They did not want to do this. They would not have unilaterally left the Gaza to go back in. It is not something the Israeli Government wanted to do.

When Hamas refused to renew the truce in the middle of December at a time that we're celebrating religious holidays throughout the world, I knew that we were in for an increase in the carnage being rained on Israel, and I'm sorry to say I was right. The Israelis, like any other sovereign nation, have a right to defend their people and protect the people of their country. Israel should not be held to a higher standard, although they hold themselves often enough to a far higher standard.

The Israelis have made two requests of Hamas. These are the two requests: They want an end to the rocket attacks. I don't think that's an unreasonable request. And they want an end to the tunnels, blow up those tunnels to prevent the rearming of a terrorist organization that has a vice grip on the Palestinian people in the Gaza. Which one of those two demands is inappropriate? Which one is unreasonable? I would submit to you, Mr. *Weiner*, neither one.

And for those that are talking about Israel's disproportionate response to 7,000 rockets, to death, to injury, to damage, how about holding the Palestinians to any standard, any measurable civilized standard, and put pressure on Hamas to stop launching those rockets into Israel? And after all of the last 2 weeks, after the pain on both sides, after the horror being perpetrated by Hamas on both the Israelis and their own people, Hamas is still launching rockets into Israel.

Well, let me say if they might be listening today, this evening as we speak, we can end this thing. We can bring peace. There can be a long-lasting truce if Hamas stops the rocket attacks and if the tunnels are eliminated. And that is what this body, the United Nations, and everyone throughout the planet, throughout this world, ought to be demanding of Hamas.

The human tragedy in the Gaza, the suffering of the Palestinian people, let us put it squarely where it belongs: not on the State of Israel, not on the Israeli people. It rests squarely on the shoulders of the Palestinian leadership. If the Palestinian leadership wanted a Palestinian State, they would have had one years ago. What Hamas is doing is not for the creation of a Palestinian State. It is for the destruction of the State of Israel. And it pains me to say this, Mr. *Weiner*, but if Israel ceased to exist tomorrow, the plight of the Palestinians would be no better than it is today. The suffering of the Palestinians would not magically go away. It is the

Palestinian leadership, the leadership in Hamas, that has caused so much pain and suffering for the Palestinian people.

It would be my heartfelt hope with the beginning of a new year and the beginning of a new administration in this country that we can truly bring peace to the Middle East. It's something that I grew up fighting for and caring about. But this cannot stop until the Israelis are secure in their tiny country and free from a constant barrage of rockets and terrorist attacks by a terrorist organization on their border.

And I thank you so much for giving me these few minutes to share my thoughts with you. You are truly an amazing leader, not only in Congress and representing your own district and State so well, but you make me very proud to be associated with you on these issues and so many more. And I thank you for all of that.” (*Congressional Record, January 14, 2009*)

“Last year, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed one of my bills which recognized the plight of victims of rocket attacks in Sderot, Israel. I commend President-elect Obama for expressing similar concern for the residents of Sderot when he visited them last year. In light of the escalating violence, I now encourage him to take a strong stance in support of our ally, Israel, and their response to Hamas’s terrorist attacks. Israel is justified in its efforts to protect its citizens from violent missile attacks

“Hamas’s actions exhibit willful disrespect for innocent human life, as civilians continue to be the targets of offensive actions. In addition, their shameful use of civilians as human shields creates unnecessary victims of terror. This flagrant disregard for the rights of innocent Gaza and Israeli residents is also a violation of international law. If Hamas cares about the citizens they purport to represent, they should cease their attacks and cooperate with international efforts to achieve a lasting peace.

“I sympathize with the families of the victims who have been injured and killed during the recent conflict. The loss of innocent life on both sides of this dispute is profoundly regrettable and is all the more reason for summoning every effort to resolve this matter and restore order. The president-elect has an opportunity to strengthen our nation's diplomatic hand and call for an end to the destruction of innocent lives, and I urge him to make it a top priority.” (*Press Release, January 8, 2009*)

Rep. Jim Gerlach (R-PA)

What was supposed to be a visit to the Gaza Strip in August 2003 took an abrupt detour. Our small group was driving along the gently rolling hills between the small southern Israeli town of Netivot and the Gaza border one minute.

The next minute we turned around and headed for Tel Aviv. The Israeli security officers assigned to protect us the best they could in one of the world’s most volatile regions would not tell the group of American visitors why we had suddenly changed course.

But it was easy to tell from the urgency in their voices that the cause was something serious. The next day in the local paper a photo of the charred frame of a car provided the answer. Palestinian militants had launched a homemade rocket across the border.

The crude device destroyed an unoccupied car about a half-mile ahead of our vehicle, causing us to quickly change our destination. Memories of that close encounter with the radical Palestinians' notion of diplomacy by terror resurfaced in recent days as the tensions – and rocket attacks on Israel – have escalated.

Israeli towns such as Ashkelon and Sderot have been targets of rocket attacks from the Gaza border for years. Attacks are so frequent in Sderot that in addition to swing sets and sliding boards, playgrounds are equipped with bomb shelters where children and their parents dash for cover.

The constant threat of attack from a neighbor governed by Hamas -- a terrorist organization that for years has been sending suicide bombers with explosives strapped to their chests into markets and onto public buses to pursue its goal of destroying Israel – makes the Israeli response to the most recent unprovoked rocket attacks from Palestine justifiable.

Israel is simply protecting itself from a very dangerous neighbor. It's a neighbor who has been emboldened to grow more bellicose by the support of a radical regime in Iran and by the criticism that has been leveled by some European governments.

All countries have the right to defend themselves and the safety of their citizens. I'm pretty sure that if a radical group took over Canada and started lobbing missiles into Buffalo, the U.S. government's response would be swift and decisive.

The world should not expect Israel to react any differently while it is under attack. Some have suggested that the recent unrest resulted from the Bush administration's failure to foster peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

Certainly, Bush's Middle East policy is open to plenty of debate. However, it's extremely unfair and a completely inaccurate understanding of the region to blame Bush for the deteriorating conditions during the last week or so. The Israeli Air Force would not have flown one mission into Gaza if it were not for the rocket attacks sanctioned by Hamas.

The problem is the thousands of indiscriminate rocket attacks on Israel, which have increased and become more sophisticated since Hamas came to power. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has clearly stated that the goal of Israel's military response has been to end the rocket attacks, not to take over new territory.

And Israel deserves the support of the United States and the rest of the world as it struggles to achieve that goal. Otherwise, we can expect several more detours on the path to peace in the region. (*Press Release, January 3, 2009*)

Rep. Louie Gohmert (R-TX)

“Israel is the most democratic nation in the Middle East and, accordingly, we should do all we can to support and encourage such a friend. Yet, every time Israel gives land away, either when negotiated or when done unilaterally as a goodwill gesture, the land has been used as a staging area to attack Israel. My visit to that area over a year ago provided the stark realization that the rocket attacks coming from Gaza were daily and deadly. All nations have the right of self-defense, and that certainly applies to Israel. The Palestinian leaders should show their good will and intentions by using some of the billions of dollars given to them by the U.S. and other countries to build housing for the Palestinians to help lessen the anger there rather than fomenting it. However, the Palestinian leadership told me last year that was not happening. Good will is certainly not demonstrated by the Palestinians’ unending rocket attacks and bombings in Israel. Whether in a Texas courtroom or on the world stage, acting in self-defense is an exonerating policy and that is what Israel is trying to do.” *(Press Release, January 9, 2009)*

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC)

“I’m deeply troubled by the recent rocket and mortar attacks on Israel launched by Hamas. No one should have to live in constant fear and no sovereign nation can stand by while their citizens are attacked daily by terrorists. Years ago, Israel controlled Gaza and surrendered authority over the area in order to broker a better peace. In exchange, Israel has patiently waited for Hamas to renounce its violent ways, act responsibly, recognize Israel's right to exist, and come to the negotiating table. However, it is clear Hamas has no intention of living peacefully with Israel.

With an unwillingness to move forward, Israel has every right to take the necessary steps to protect and defend its citizens and target those who preach hate and violence. Israelis and Palestinians both deserve to live in peace, and I have always hoped a safe and secure Israel could live side by side with a sovereign and peaceful Palestine. Through their actions, members of Hamas have made it clear the organization is nothing more than a mouth piece and aggressive arm of the Iranians that cannot act independently for the benefit of the Palestinian people. Hamas must renounce violence and act as an honest broker. If it does not, it will be the responsibility of every nation in the Middle East to shut down the long supply lines of rockets, bullets and bombs that run from Iran to Hamas in Gaza.” *(Written Statement, January 13, 2009)*

“Hamas has taken over the Gaza Strip. They are a very radical organization. They’ve got one foot in politics and one foot in terrorism, and Israel is just being shelled continuously. What would we do, Brian, if we got one rocket from Mexico or Canada? I mean – what would we do? We would go in with a lot of force and I just can not tell you how unacceptable it is. And the world is condemning Israel and the Arab world and I didn’t hear one person, other than Abbas, condemn Hamas for shooting rockets randomly at Israeli families.” *(Interview on Fox News, December 29, 2008)*

Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA)

“ Hamas presumably doesn't want peace with Israel, so whatever their logic, Hamas tries to kill Israelis by lobbing rockets into Israel. Now, if they'd stop, Israel would not strike back at them in Gaza. But otherwise, what would you expect the Israeli government to do? It would be the same thing you'd expect President-elect Obama to do when he gets to be president. If Americans were being shelled, you'd expect him to defend America. If Israel is being shot at from Gaza by Hamas, Hamas should expect to be shot back at. I mean, that's just the way the world works.” (*The Talk of Iowa broadcast, December 30, 2008*)

Rep. Sam Graves (R-MO)

“ Madam Speaker, I wish to express my strong support for House Resolution 34, recognizing Israel's universal and sovereign right to defend itself from acts of war and aggression, and reaffirming the United States' strong support for Israel in our mutual fight against terrorism.

The cause of the present crisis is clear. Hamas, a terrorist organization committed to the destruction of Israel, has continually violated the territorial integrity of the State of Israel, a member of the United Nations, by launching thousands of rocket attacks from Gaza for the purpose of terrorizing and killing the citizens of Israel.

Hamas has received substantial support in its campaign of terror from other rogue nations, most notably Iran, which has provided Hamas with the material and expertise to conduct their rocket attacks.

In responding to these attacks, Israel is exercising its sovereign right to self defense, a legitimate right recognized by the international community.

Unfortunately, rather than lay the blame for this crisis where it belongs, with Hamas and its leadership, too many of our international allies have instead criticized Israel.

Blaming Israel for this present situation is akin to blaming the victim of a crime for the actions of a criminal. These criticisms of a sovereign state exercising its legitimate right to self defense will only embolden Hamas and terrorists everywhere.

House Resolution 34 recognizes that it is Hamas that is responsible for this present crisis and expresses our nation's solidarity with our friends and allies in Israel during their time of great danger. It is for this reason that I wish to express my strong support for House Resolution 34.” (*Congressional Record, January 13, 2009*)

Rep. Alan Grayson (D-FL)

(Washington, D.C.) – Congressman Alan Grayson, one of three incoming Jewish members of Congress, issued the following statement on the situation in Gaza.

“ The circumstances confronting Israel are remarkable and clear. Hamas has been firing or allowing the firing of rockets into Israel, killing and maiming Israelis and threatening and disrupting their lives on a regular basis. This is unacceptable. Israeli civilians must not suffer from rocket attacks from or permitted by Hamas. Any country would seek to end attacks like this on its citizens. Military action is always a last resort, but in this case it is apparently necessary.

The humanitarian crisis is of deep concern, and it is important to note that Hamas's behavior has been especially brutal. By using Palestinians as human shields, the group is needlessly multiplying the casualties in the area. If Hamas had an interest in minimizing the loss of life, its leaders would not be putting civilians in harm's way or firing rockets at civilian targets. That is just not a way to solve the thorny set of problems confronting all people in the region." *(Press Release, January 8, 2009)*

Secretary of State Trey Grayson (R-KY)

"In 2008, I spent a week in Israel and visited southern Israel near Gaza. We stopped at a lookout point near a reservoir with a view of Gaza and were told we were 'outside of sniper range but inside of rocket range.' In fact, there was scarring along the wall of the reservoir from a Qassam rocket that had landed only a few hundred feet from where we were. In the past, visitors stood at an outlook closer to Gaza but since snipers have shot at visitors, no one goes to that lookout.

While there I met Tamar, an Israeli citizen who formerly lived in one of the Jewish settlements in Gaza. She described the 'old days' in Gaza when Arab and Jew interacted and attended festivals together - the days that we all hope to see return. Then, she described her present day life as a resident living right outside the border of Gaza since Israel completely withdrew in 2005. She shared her anxiety as a mother who must constantly be on the lookout for the next warning siren alerting an incoming rocket or mortar. A mother who must make a quick decision about her own safety and the safety of her children, and acting quickly knowing that she has only seconds to protect her two children, one of whom is disabled.

My hope is that some day Tamar and the other residents of southern Israel will be able to enjoy a normal life, free from constant rocket and mortar attacks. The State of Israel not only has the right to defend itself; it has the moral obligation to its citizens to do so." *(Public Statement, January 8, 2009)*

Rep. Gene Green (D-TX)

"Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 34. This important resolution recognizes Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, while at the same time supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and recognizing that the humanitarian needs in Gaza should be promptly addressed.

For fourteen days, now, Israel has launched airstrikes and now, a ground invasion in response to thousands of Hamas-sanctioned rocket attacks on Israeli towns from the Gaza Strip. The strikes began less than a week after the expiration of a six-month-long ceasefire deal with Hamas--during which time, Hamas continually violated the cease-fire and shot rockets into southern Israel. Israel has a right to defend itself from these attacks and when Hamas announced that it was ending its ``period of calm," Israel began to do just that.

I have visited Israel on several occasions, and have seen the struggles Israelis face daily. I have even been to Sderot, Israel and have seen how close these attacks are and how they

affect the families that live there. During these visits, I have seen the Israelis' perseverance and determination to create a peaceful and prosperous state despite Hamas' continued refusal to work towards a peaceful resolution. Hamas must end this violence and commit itself to a real truce. Without this, I believe that there is little chance for peace in the region.

Israel and the United States have been close friends and allies for the past sixty years. Our relations have evolved from an initial American policy of sympathy and support for the creation of a Jewish homeland in 1948 to a key partnership based on common economic interests, common security interests, and most of all common values. We must continue to cultivate this relationship and encourage peace in the region.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Washington, D.C.- For three days, now, Israel has launched airstrikes in response to hundreds of Hamas-sanctioned rocket attacks on Israeli towns from the Gaza Strip. Today, Hamas-backed militants fired a new round of rocket attacks on the Israeli towns of Ashkelon and Sderot. The strikes began less than a week after the expiration of a six-month-long ceasefire deal with Hamas.

“I have been fortunate enough to have visited Israel on several occasions, and have seen the struggles Israelis face daily,” said Congressman Gene Green. “I have been to Sderot, Israel and have seen how close these attacks are and how they affect the families that live there. I have also seen the Israelis’ perseverance and determination to create a peaceful and prosperous state. Hamas must end this violence and commit itself to a real truce. Without this, there is little chance for peace in the region.”

Green said that Israel and the United States have been close friends and allies for the past sixty years. “Our relations have evolved from an initial American policy of sympathy and support for the creation of a Jewish homeland in 1948 to a key partnership based on common economic interests, common security interests, and most of all common values. We must continue to cultivate this relationship and encourage peace in the region.” (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH)

"It's not good, but you can't say Israel shouldn't act," said Gregg. "Hamas is a terrorist group and I have no sympathy for them." (*The Associated Press, December 29, 2008*)

Sen. Kay Hagan (D-NC)

“Israel has a sovereign right to defend its people from terrorists like Hamas. It is detestable that these terrorists hide among innocent civilians who seek a peaceful coexistence with Israel. Israel is a strong ally of the United States and serves as a beacon of democracy in the Middle East. While my heart goes out to those innocent civilians in Gaza, Israel has the right to take whatever steps are required to protect its people and its way of life.” (*Written Statement, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. John Hall (D-NY)

“Following an intense barrage of rocket attacks into Southern Israel by the terrorist group Hamas, the Israeli Defense Forces entered Gaza in December 2008 to put an end to the rocket fire. Article 51 of the United Nations Charter allows nations to engage in self-defense against armed attacks. Hamas is listed as a terrorist organization by the U.S. State Department and has repeatedly expressed the explicit goal of destroying the state of Israel.

During my first year in Congress, I witnessed the devastating effects of these rocket attacks first hand. I had the privilege of visiting Israel and during my visit I walked inside a home that was hit by rocket fire in Sderot, just outside Gaza. As I stood in the room with the rocket shell in my hands and peered through the open hole in the roof into the open blue sky, I realized that any nation would take drastic measures to make such attacks stop. Israel has the right to destroy those arms caches and organizations that support these attacks. In doing so, they must exercise maximum effort so that there will be minimum casualties.

The United States can and must play an integral role in ending the violence and establishing a lasting peace. Hundreds of thousands of Israeli and Palestinian civilians have been displaced by the conflict, and isolated by Hamas’s aggressive posture. Every day that passes brings with it the loss of innocent life, the loss of hope, and the loss of future opportunities. The United States needs to work with the international community, especially the neighboring Arab states, to forge a peace agreement that disarms Hamas and brings order to Gaza and the surrounding region. I hope that this confrontation will be quickly resolved, and talks will continue to create a durable, sustainable peace in the Middle East.” (*Written Statement, January 8, 2009*)

Rep. Phil Hare (D-IL)

WASHINGTON, DC- Congressman Phil Hare (D-IL) today released the following statement on the situation in Gaza.

“I am troubled by the violence in Gaza and deeply regret the loss of innocent life on both sides of the conflict. But Israel’s recent military action is not only appropriate, it is necessary to stop acts of terrorism against its citizens. For two years, Hamas has fired rockets into Israel, putting nearly a million people at risk in the process. Israel has the right to defend itself and America should stand strongly behind its ally. Last year on my trip to Israel, I visited the town of Sderot which has been hit by thousands of rocket attacks in the last decade. The families I met there refused to leave their homes, showing the true bravery of the Israeli people. Israel has made countless concessions in an effort to achieve peace in the Middle East. Unfortunately, Hamas is more committed to the destruction of Israel than a truly sustainable peace. The Palestinian people deserve better from their leaders.” (*Press Release, January 7, 2009*)

Rep. Jane Harman (D-CA)

“Madam Speaker, I've seen Israel up close and personal on almost two dozen trips. I've seen thousands of spent missiles stockpiled in Sderot, witnessed destruction of homes and buildings, and know a government official from Israel who was seriously wounded. I have also spent time on Israel's border with Lebanon, including a trip there during the 2006 Hezbollah war while rockets flew overhead.

Israel, indeed any country, has a right to defend herself from attack. The U.S. must stand by our only democratic ally in the Middle East. Hamas' ability to strike Israeli cities is continuing evidence that it has been receiving illicit arms for use against Israel--no doubt with the complicity of its sponsors in Iran.

However, Israelis are not the only victims. The Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank have paid a huge price, too. They have been held hostage by the Hamas leadership since its 2006 coup against the Palestinian authority. And they are being used as human shields.

That said, Israel's effort must minimize civilian casualties and maximize Red Cross access. Measures to permit humanitarian aid must be sustained.

As this resolution states, our President must work actively to support a durable, enforceable, and sustainable cease-fire, promote a two-state solution, and encourage and strengthen moderate Palestinian voices.

This House is doing its part today. Following Senate action yesterday, we signal bipartisan, bicameral support for this effort.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

State Rep. Adam Hasner (R-FL)

House Majority Leader Adam Hasner (R-Delray Beach) today announced his sponsorship of a bi-partisan resolution expressing solidarity with the people of Israel and supporting Israel's right to self-defense from attacks by Hamas. Leader Hasner will be filing the resolution to be heard at the start of the Special Session scheduled to begin on Monday, January 5, 2009. Florida State Senator Ted Deutch (D-Boca Raton) will be filing a similar resolution in the Florida Senate.

In conjunction with the filing of the House resolution, Hasner released the following statement:

“Since Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, the thousands of rockets and mortars launched against innocent Israeli civilian targets by the Iranian-sponsored Hamas and Islamic Jihad organizations demonstrate in deed their declared intention of destroying the State of Israel.

“In a fully justified defense of its citizens and its democracy, Israel's government has been forced to respond to the terrorist attacks emanating from Gaza in order to change the current realities. In doing so, Israel has acted firmly against the terrorists' strongholds while exerting extreme effort to minimize suffering and casualty of innocent Palestinians, who are cynically being used as human shields.

“As an American and as a Jew, and with the support of those in the Florida House of Representatives from many religions, races, and regions across this great state, I am proud to lead the bipartisan effort in the Florida House of Representatives to express our firm solidarity with the people of Israel and support the government of Israel's right to protect and defend themselves against terrorism and destruction from these ongoing attacks.

“And as we begin the New Year, we pray for a peaceful end to these hostilities. May God Bless Israel, America's democratic ally in the Middle East.”

First elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 2002, Hasner has been a consistent leader on Israel-related issues. In addition to sponsoring Florida's first-in-the-nation Iran Divestment legislation, which prohibits the investment of public funds in companies doing business in Iran, Hasner has also sponsored legislation that prohibits life insurance companies doing business in Florida from denying coverage to individuals who travel to Israel. He has also been a strong advocate of the Florida-Israel Institute based at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton. (*Press Release, January 2, 2009*)

Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-FL)

Ft. Lauderdale, FL – U.S. Representative Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) issued the following statement today regarding on-going events in Israel and the Gaza Strip:

“I, like so many others, am deeply troubled by the on-going events in Israel and the Gaza Strip.

“It is regrettable that in response to Hamas' refusal to negotiate with Israel and continue its ceasefire, Israel was forced into this situation. Hamas has chosen war over peace. Israel has but no other choice to respond and protect its citizens.

“When I was in Israel earlier this month, I told Prime Minister Olmert that the United States would not tolerate Hamas attacks on Israel. I reinforced the overwhelming view in Congress that Hamas is not only an impediment to peace between Israel and the Palestinians, but also to Israel's efforts to establish normal diplomatic relations with many in the Arab world.

“In my meetings on that same trip with leaders and dignitaries in North Africa and the Middle East, I learned that this view is shared by many in the Arab world who see Hamas for what it is: a terrorist organization which feeds off of instability and fear rather than seeking to improve the lives of Palestinians.

“I stand with Israel and support President-elect Obama in his efforts to bring about peace and stability in the Middle East.”

Earlier this month, Representative Hastings traveled to North Africa and the Middle East in his capacity as Chairman of the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission) and as the Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly. During the trip, Representative Hastings met with foreign leaders, parliamentarians, dignitaries and NGOs in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel, and Portugal. He also met

with former Jordanian Foreign Minister and current Jordanian Ambassador to Egypt Hani al-Mulki who helped negotiate the Israel-Jordan peace accords in 1994. (*Press Release, December 29, 2008*)

Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R-TX)

“Madam Speaker, as a Member of Congress it is a high honor to cast my vote in the people's House. In my career, I have exercised that privilege over 4,200 times. While my record is not perfect, I am proud that last year I participated in 99 percent of all votes.

That is all the more reason why I am filled with regret that I unintentionally missed my opportunity to cast a vote last Friday on Rollcall No. 10, the resolution recognizing Israel's right to defend herself against attacks from Gaza. As a longtime supporter of Israel and her right to exist, I want to inform the House that were I present for the vote, I would have voted in favor of this important resolution.

Madam Speaker, I offer my strong support of Israel and H. Res. 34. Since the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza in 2005, Hamas has continually launched thousands of rockets into southern Israel, killing innocent civilians, destroying vital infrastructure and private property, and holding hostage virtually all southern Israel's residents.

Though the Egyptian-brokered ceasefire of June 2008 reduced the number of rocket attacks from Gaza, the attacks never fully ended. Instead, Hamas and its foreign allies used this opportunity to smuggle more weapons into the region. Once the ceasefire expired on December 19, 2008, Hamas resumed its daily attacks on Israel with increased ferocity using its new and improved longer range Iranian-made rockets smuggled in during the ceasefire. Israel was left with little choice but to retaliate against these attacks by targeting Hamas' military forces and weapons stockpiles.

While any loss of life is deplorable, the fact remains that it was Hamas who forced Israel to resort to a military solution. Thus, I offer Israel my full support in the efforts to protect her citizens. If America fell under the same daily barrage of rocket attacks, we would not hesitate to strike back with military force, nor would we seek permission to take the necessary steps to protect our citizens.

Madam Speaker, Israel has a legal, moral, and historical right to exist in peace with secure and defensible borders. While it is my earnest prayer that this current conflict may be resolved shortly through a durable and sustainable ceasefire, Israel cannot put at risk the security of her people by allowing Hamas to continue to export violence from Gaza.

The loss of innocent civilian life is tragic and it is deplorable that Hamas complicates Israel's attempts to avoid civilian casualties by stockpiling weapons in homes and in mosques and using public places like schools to launch their sinister attacks on Israel . The Palestinian people deserve better.

Peace can never be achieved so long as terrorist groups like Hamas continue to operate. Israel has been our staunchest ally in the Middle East and a full partner in the global war against radical jihadists--individuals who would destroy our Nation, our children, our values, and the very existence of Western civilization. We must continue to support Israel's right to defend

herself against those who seek to destroy her and continue to support efforts to bring a lasting peace between Israel and her neighbors.

Madam Speaker, I support H. Res. 34 and Israel's right to defend herself from attack.”
(*Congressional Record, January 21, 2009*)

WASHINGTON — U. S. Congressman Jeb Hensarling (TX-05) today issued the following statement on the recent Israeli retaliation against Hamas militants:

“Since Hamas has bombarded southern Israel with thousands of rockets, Israel has rightly retaliated by targeting Hamas’ center of power and weapons stockpiles. I offer Israel my full support in the efforts to protect her citizens. As Israeli ground troops move into the region, we pray for their safety and hope that a durable and sustainable peace will be reached.

“Unfortunately, peace can never be achieved in the region as long as terrorist groups like Hamas continue to attack Israel. It is vital to the security interests of Israel, the United States, and the rest of the Arab world that these rocket attacks on Israel cease.

“The loss of innocent civilian life is tragic and it is regrettable that Hamas complicates Israel’s attempts to avoid civilian casualties by stockpiling weapons in homes and mosques. The Palestinian people deserve better.

“Israel has been the United States’ staunchest ally in the Middle East. We must continue to support Israel’s right to defend herself against those who seek to destroy her and continue to support efforts to bring a lasting peace between Israel and her neighbors.” (*Press Release, January 5, 2009*)

Rep. Wally Herger (R-CA)

"Israel's response to the repeated attacks from Hamas terrorists is entirely justifiable and understandable. Israel cannot stand idle while their citizens are the target of constant terrorist activities. For enduring peace in the Middle East to occur, Hamas must recognize Israel's fundamental right to exist, permanently stop attacking the people of Israel, and join with moderate Palestinians in pursuing an agreement where Israel's lasting security is unconditionally assured." (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Rep. Brian Higgins (D-NY)

“While there has been far too much suffering on both sides of the Israeli – Palestinian conflict, Israel has attempted to limit civilian casualties even as Hamas continues to directly target Israeli civilians and use women and children as human shields. Although Israel unilaterally pulled out of Gaza in concession to the Palestinians more than three years ago, Hamas has responded with increased aggression and violence. Peace between Israelis and Palestinians will only be possible when Palestinian leaders reject violence; until then the United States must support Israel’s right to defend itself from this terrorist threat.” (*Written Statement, January 7, 2009*)

Rep. Jim Himes (D-CT)

“Over the past six weeks, the citizens of Israel have endured a torrent of over 600 rockets fired on their cities and towns by Hamas forces located in Gaza. Israel has endured a steady stream of thousands of rockets into its territory since 2005. The recent escalation in violence from Hamas has made the threat to Israel’s security intolerable. Like any sovereign state in the world, Israel has the right to respond to violent attacks directed indiscriminately against its people and its territory. Over the past several days, Israel has responded forcefully to the terror tactics of Hamas, specifically targeting military objectives such as Hamas' command centers, security installations, rocket-launching sites, weapons stockpiles, and weapons smuggling tunnels.

“The escalation in violence in the tense background of the Middle East is always regrettable, and the loss of innocent civilian life on both sides is tragic. But the world must stand with Israel in affirming its right to protect and defend its people. I was heartened to learn that even in the midst of the fighting, Israel has continued to ship over 100 truckloads of humanitarian aid and hundred of thousands of gallons of fuel into Gaza. Israel continues to provide a lifeline of electricity to civilian residents of Gaza as well.

“If Hamas wants to achieve peace and security for Gaza, it must immediately stop the reckless and indiscriminate rocket attacks on Israel, without conditions or reservations. Israel has made it plain that its measures against Hamas will cease when Israel is secure in its own borders, and free from the threat of daily terrorist bombardments on its citizens. There is some hope that Hamas will recognize the advantage of a cessation of hostilities. My New Year's wish is that this hope turns into the reality of a stable and lasting cease-fire.” (*Press Release, January 5, 2009*)

Rep. Paul Hodes (D-NH)

Concord, NH--- Congressman Paul Hodes (D, NH-2) released the following statement on the ongoing violence in the Middle East.

"It is extremely unfortunate that Hamas' despicable terrorist activity has necessitated a response from Israel to protect itself. I had the opportunity to visit Sderot last year and saw first hand the damage done by incessant rocket attacks launched from Gaza. The United States must stand by Israel's right to defend itself. We call on Hamas to renounce terrorism, recognize Israel’s right to exist and to live in peace. The attacks from Hamas must end for a constructive peace dialogue to begin. Our thoughts are with the families in the region during this difficult time and our hope is for an end to the violence and peace negotiations to resume." (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA)

“Madam Speaker, I rise today to offer my comments on H. Res. 34 , a resolution which reaffirms our commitment to Israel and its right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza and Hamas.

I have always been a strong supporter of Israel, and consider myself a good friend to Israel. Israel's right to exist as a country is unquestionable in my mind, and I support its right to defend itself from those who would do harm to its people.

I also strongly support a durable and sustainable cease-fire in Gaza, and support a resolution to the conflict through diplomacy and negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. I have consistently supported efforts to increase peacemaking efforts in the region, including asking the President to appoint a special envoy to the Middle East.

For these important reasons, I voted in favor of H. Res. 34 . This resolution rightly reiterates our support for the safety, security, and welfare of Israel. However, Madam Speaker, H. Res. 34 is not perfect, and my vote for it today is not unequivocal. The resolution does not adequately address the civilian casualties in Gaza, or the worsening humanitarian situation there. The world has a responsibility to join together to help solve this crisis. I also hope that the incoming Administration will turn this hope into reality.

The human consequence of this violence has taken a tragic toll on Gaza civilians, where access to basic humanitarian needs is limited, and dangerous. Some reports by the International Committee of the Red Cross describe the movement of ambulances and aid workers as extremely difficult, and attribute that difficulty to Israel's restrictions. In addition to this challenge, existing hospitals are running out of fuel, power, and supplies to treat victims.

We are right to support Israel's right to defend itself, but we must not forget that innocent Gaza civilians are living under harsh, even desperate, conditions right now. Both the Israeli and Palestinian people deserve to live a life free of the threat of attack or psychological fear. It has always been my hope that our involvement in the region may be used to improve the lives of the people affected by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Once again, Madam Speaker, my vote in favor of H. Res. 34 reflects my strong support for Israel, but the severe humanitarian plight of Gaza civilians is something we must not ignore.”
(*Congressional Record*, January 9, 2009)

Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD)

“Today this House stands united in support of Israel as it faces enemies bent on its destruction. For eight years, Hamas, aided by Iran and others, has sent deadly rockets and mortars into Israel. In 2005, Israel dismantled its settlements and withdrew its military from Gaza—and still the rockets came, more than 6,000 since Israel’s withdrawal. Each one of them—intended to kill the maximum number of civilians, and falling indiscriminately on southern Israel’s cities and towns—was a war crime, by definition. Their harm is undeniable, and I have seen it firsthand; when I travelled to the southern Israeli town of Sderot, I met families whose children had lost the ability to speak, who no longer had control of their bodily functions. That is the profound and ever-present fear that covers much of Israel today.

“But the situation in Gaza is no less tragic. As Secretary Rice said last week, ‘ Hamas has held the people of Gaza hostage ever since their illegal coup against...the legitimate President of the Palestinian people.’ To the Hamas terrorists, the ordinary people of Gaza are not fellow citizens, but, all too often, propaganda props. As reporter Jeffrey Goldberg writes: ‘ Hamas terrorists unblinkingly and ostentatiously use their own civilians as human shields. I’ve seen this up-close, and it’s repulsive.’ For Hamas, the lives of Palestinians are valued as cheaply as the lives of Israelis.

“Having exhausted diplomatic options and confronted with an enemy sworn to its destruction, Israel has had no choice but to take military action in order to relieve the threat against its people. By offering this resolution, we recognize Israel’s right to act in self-defense—the same right claimed by America, or any other sovereign nation, when faced with a similar threat. We urge both sides to protect the lives of civilians. And we urge the Administration to work towards a durable cease-fire that puts an end to the fighting and to its cause—Hamas’s ability to threaten Israel.

“Only when Israel’s enemies forswear violence and recognize Israel’s right to exist will we be any closer to a just and lasting peace: one in which the Palestinian and Israeli people can live in their own states, side by side.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

“During this difficult war in the Gaza Strip, we stand with Israel. Why? Because we have been to Israel. We have seen Sderot.

In August 2005 and again in 2007, we visited the region of southern Israel that includes this embattled Israeli border town. Taken together, the trips helped us define the historical and military context for Israel's current action in Gaza.

Our 2005 visit to Israel took place during the "disengagement" period, when Israel painfully uprooted its military and all Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip. Former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon made the decision to leave in spite of significant domestic opposition. We remember how divided Israeli society was, with critics defiantly brandishing orange protest ribbons from their cars. Mr. Sharon's goal, however, was an international show of good faith to kick-start a moribund peace process by giving the Palestinians what they asked for: full control of Gaza.

The plan collapsed. Israel's good intentions were never reciprocated. Instead of building roads, bridges, schools and industry, Hamas and other terrorists wasted millions turning Gaza into an armory. The already flimsy notion that Palestinian terrorism was a consequence of Israeli occupation -- an article of faith among those currently decrying Israel's "aggression" -- blew up along with the 7,000 indiscriminate rockets Palestinian terrorists began to launch into Israel.

By the time we returned to the border area in 2007, formerly sleepy southern Israeli towns like Sderot were gripped by fear. Each day, scores of rockets pounded the region. It reminded us of how life was paralyzed in the Washington metropolitan area when just a single sniper fired random shots at civilians. But southern Israel was far worse. We remember Israeli families from Sderot describing how every facet of their lives was consumed by the "15-second rule": Each time a rocket was fired from Gaza, the Israeli government sounded a siren

indicating 15 seconds to take cover. We were told by Israelis those tasks as simple as taking a shower or stepping outside to grab a newspaper felt like a game of Russian roulette. We met families whose children had lost the ability to speak, and who no longer had control of their basic bodily functions -- due to the profound and ever-present fear.

Prior to military action, Israel tried a number of other options to stop the rockets, all to no avail. Israel pleaded with Palestinian terror groups to stop their attacks. Israel raised numerous complaints at the United Nations that fell on deaf ears. Israel imposed a blockade of Gaza to deprive Hamas terrorists of the rockets and weapons being used to attack Israel. Israel pressed Egypt to cut down on smuggling tunnels used to deliver rockets and weapons to terrorists. And most recently, Israel worked with Egypt to broker a six-month cease-fire with Hamas.

As Israel negotiated for peace, Hamas built up its weapons supply, acquiring longer-range, more powerful rockets, which are now paralyzing almost 1 million Israelis. Israel's decision to go to war came late last month when Hamas declared that it would not renew the Egyptian-brokered, six-month cease-fire (a cease-fire, it should be noted, that Hamas frequently violated and was urged by Egypt to restore).

In any armed conflict, both sides are obligated by international law to seek to minimize civilian casualties. At a time when far too many civilians are falling victim in this conflict, we urge adherence to this essential principle just as we encourage all sides to ensure that humanitarian relief reaches civilians in Gaza. What distinguishes the two sides, however, is their very aim. While Israel targets military combatants, Hamas aims to kill as many Israeli civilians as possible. Hamas, after all, is one of the Middle East's most notorious terrorist outfits. Since its inception in 1987, it has worked systematically to fulfill the goal laid out in its charter: the destruction of Israel. During the last Intifada, Hamas claimed credit for 52 suicide bombings that killed 288 Israelis, according to Israeli government figures.

A culture that celebrates death is only too happy to sacrifice its own people for the sake of rallying world support. In the heat of war, Hamas is holding true to its indisputable record as it launches rockets from neighborhoods, schools, markets and mosques. This is in stark contrast with Israelis, who drop leaflets and make phone calls to Palestinian civilians in targeted areas, alerting the civilians, but forfeiting the element of surprise.

Like most Americans, we identify strongly with Israel's ongoing, elusive quest to achieve peace and security in a dangerous part of the world. We recognize that by arming and training Hamas, Iran has made this latest Israel-Hamas war a key front in its effort to remake the region in its own radical image.

America would never sit still if terrorists were lobbing missiles across our border into Texas or Montana; and just as we assert our right to defend ourselves, Israel has every right to protect its own citizens from the implacable foes on its borders. Support for Israel in her time of need, from both Democrats and Republicans, is not just the logical choice. It is both a strategic and moral imperative.”

House Republican Whip Eric Cantor represents Virginia's 7th Congressional District. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer represents Maryland's 5th Congressional District. (*Washington Times*, January 9, 2009)

WASHINGTON, DC – House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer (MD) released the following statement today on the developing situation in Gaza:

“Israel is acting in clear self-defense in response to heinous rocket attacks from Hamas-controlled Gaza. As a sovereign nation, Israel has an unequivocal right to take action to ensure the security and safety of her citizens. Indiscriminate attacks by Hamas are a serious detriment to the peace process in the region.” (*Press Release, December 29, 2008*)

Rep. Duncan D. Hunter (R-CA)

“Israel, provoked by Hamas' terrorist and radical agenda, maintains every right to defend itself. Hamas is a terrorist organization that represents a constant threat to Israel and the rest of the democratic world. We must stand with Israel as we work towards a resolution to this conflict.” (*KUSI News Interview, January 8, 2009*)

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX)

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), Texas' senior Senator, issued a statement today on the conflict between Israel and the terrorist group Hamas:

“There should be no question that Israel, like all sovereign nations, has a right and a duty to defend its citizens against the unprovoked rocket attacks launched by Hamas terrorists from Gaza.

“In 2005, as a conciliatory gesture, the Israelis pulled their military forces out of Gaza. Palestinian terrorists have since responded to that gesture by launching thousands of rockets from their safe havens in Gaza into Israel. These rocket attacks can have only one purpose – to strike terror in the hearts of their victims. These Iranian supplied rockets are not guided or precision weapons. No one launching them knows where they will ultimately land and once launched, they might just as easily land on a school house or a hospital as on a military target. The goal of these rockets, simply put, is to kill and terrorize all Israelis – be they civilian or military. No nation can or should tolerate that type of indiscriminate violence directed against their citizens.

“Unfortunately, Hamas leaders have demonstrated time and again that they have little interest in peaceful coexistence with the State of Israel. Indeed, their goal is, and remains, the complete destruction of Israel as a nation. To halt the rocket attacks, Israel has pursued an aggressive military campaign to once and for all destroy the terrorists' capability to launch rockets and terrorize innocent civilians in Israel and to punish those responsible. Israel's decision to respond with a ground invasion of Gaza, rather than retaliatory air attacks, is in fact proportional in its respect for innocent civilian life as a number of Hamas rocket launch sites and terror strongholds are located among neighborhoods and school districts. A ground invasion was the only way Israel could mitigate the loss of civilian life.

“I deeply regret the tragic loss of human life in Gaza and in Israel but there is no moral equivalency here, as some have suggested. Israel is doing what any nation must do –

responding to terrorist aggression and protecting their citizens.” (*Press Release, January 6, 2009*)

Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-GA)

“Mr. President, I rise for a few moments to address two subjects, the first will be about Israel and the second about the passing of Griffin Bell.

All of us are deeply concerned with the conditions in the Middle East, most recently in the last 12 days, the actions in Gaza, the loss of human life and the conflict.

But there is a necessary perspective we all must understand. In November of 2007, I stood at the last Israeli outpost overlooking Gaza. In fact, if you watch Fox or CNN or NBC or ABC tonight, where you will see those reports coming from, I stood on that very spot just a little over a year ago.

Also, I went to Sderot, the Israeli settlement outside Gaza, that since mid year last year has received 1, 2, 3, 10, 15 missile attacks, random attacks coming out of Gaza dropping on this Israeli settlement for no reason at all but the absolute ability or desire to terrorize the Israeli people and destroy that settlement.

What Israel has done by moving into Gaza is a major military operation. In some reports that you see on television or you read about in the papers, you would think it was unprovoked and unnecessary. The opposite is true. It has been provoked for 15 months by Hamas in Gaza. The Israelis have finally drawn a line in the sand and they have moved in to try to protect the best interests of their citizens.

For perspective, Gaza and Sderot are a little bit like Arlington and Washington. You are not talking about a large land mass, you are talking about a very narrow, tight area. It would be similar to South Carolina and Georgia lobbing missiles back and forth.

What would happen if one of those States did it? We would immediately react to protect our citizens and protect their lives and their livelihoods. That is what Israel is doing.

I pray every night that somehow and some way we can be a catalyst for ultimately a lasting peace in the Middle East. But surrendering to terrorism or the acts of terrorism such as Hamas has been taking out on the Israeli people is no way to go. I support the Nation of Israel. I believe they are doing the right thing to confront head-on the terror that has been imposed on them.

It should not be lost on any of us that the supplies that have gotten into Gaza through what is known as the Eisenhower Passageway, which is from Egypt into Gaza, have been military materials being flown in and then taken in through tunnels basically by operatives of Iran. Just as what happened in Lebanon a year ago with Hezbollah and the Lebanese, the same thing is happening today between Gaza and the Palestinians and the Israelis.

The catalyst for the conflict is another nation, Iran. It wants to diffuse the focus on its producing of nuclear weapons and instead keep turmoil in the Middle East to use it to its benefit.

As a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, I take very seriously my responsibility to look upon every nation in this world as a nation we should respect, as a nation we should dialogue with, and as a nation we should work with. But we cannot and we must not turn our head away from a nation that is causing terror to be invoked against innocent people such as Iran is doing against Israel through the Palestinians in Gaza.

So I hope and pray these difficulties end tonight. I hope and pray there is not another loss of life. But as long as Hamas is unwilling to enter into a meaningful peace, a meaningful effort to stop the terror, one that can be trusted and verified, then Israel is doing precisely what it should be doing in the best interests of its people. It is doing no less than we in this Congress and America would do were we attacked in the same way in the same time. In the first part of my remarks, I stand in solidarity with the people of Israel in hope and prayer that the hostilities end but not because of surrender; because ultimately we confront terror and get people to lay down their arms, not for a day, not for a cease-fire but for generations to come.”
(*Congressional Record, January 6, 2009*)

Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY)

“Israel unconditionally left Gaza in the hopes that Palestinian leaders would build a State, build an economy, and build hope for their people. Instead, Hamas built rockets and fired them on innocent Israeli families. Israel is doing what any nation on earth would do under similar circumstances: defending its people from attacks by a neighbor sworn to its destruction. It's now time for responsible Palestinian and Arab leaders to assertively reject Hamas' strategy of destruction and attacks so there can be long term stability in the region.”
(*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. (D-IL)

“I have been closely following the troubling events and escalating violence in the Middle East. We in the United States must continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in support of our friend and ally Israel as it defends itself against Hamas' unrelenting rocket attacks from Gaza.

“I'm encouraged by the recent cease-fire negotiations underway in the region. The talks must seek to end the intolerable rain of rockets on southern Israel and stop the violence and killing of Israelis and Palestinians. Until a cease-fire agreement is reached, I hope that every effort and scrupulous care continues to be taken to avoid the death of innocent civilians.

“I've long believed that the only route to a sustainable peace in the Middle East is through diplomatic means, not military might. The United States must once again take a leadership role and actively engage in the multilateral effort to build a permanent path to peace between the Israeli and the Palestinian people.” (*Congressional Record, January 8, 2009*)

Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX)

“Madam Speaker, I rise to support H. Res. 34 . War is ugly. That is why it took more than 6,000 or so rockets before Israel decided to defend herself. There is no doubt that we, as Members of Congress, wrap ourselves around the need for humanitarian aid and relief. We too feel the pain of loss of life.

But I think it is important to understand the resolution. It gives a wonderful roadmap for the decision of peace, a two-state solution, Israel and Palestine.

But what it does say, and what all of us have to commit ourselves to, is that no nation can stand for the extinguishing of other people in another sovereign nation. All Hamas has to do is to stand for the dignity and integrity of the Palestinian people, to allow Israel to survive and stand, to commit to its existence and to promote the survival of its people.

We must rally around people, women and children and families. But we cannot engage in peace unless all stand down.

This resolution is a roadmap for that. It is to encourage Egypt to continue in the peace process. It is to close the tunnels. It is to make sure that we are supporting the dignity of all.

I support this resolution. I beg the people of Palestine to stand up for dignity, peace, democracy and freedom for all.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

“Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 34, the Gaza Conflict Resolution. We must end the current violence and bloodshed among both Palestinians and Israelis. This resolution reaffirms our support for Israel but additionally reaffirms our commitment toward a continuing peace process.

With this resolution, we call for an end to the rocket and missile attacks from Hamas and ask that they recognize previous cease fire agreements between Israel and Palestine.

In response to the attacks, however, Israel, as a sovereign nation, does maintain the right to defend its borders and citizens from aggression. This basic right to protect our people is not one that we should undermine. Our country knows too well that a response must be made when we are attacked and our way of life disrupted. However, there must be humanitarian considerations in any conflict, and there must be steps taken to protect civilians and prevent attacks on innocent school children.

In both countries, as a result of the attacks and subsequent response, civilians are being killed, injured and witnesses to horrific tragedy. Humanitarian aid has only recently been allowed into Palestine and there is no doubt that there is terrible human suffering on all sides.

It is my hope that this resolution will help offer a roadmap to a peaceful solution, and that there will soon be an end to the violence. We cannot forget that beneath the politics, there is great human tragedy.

I will support this resolution, but believe that we must focus on ending this continuing violence and search for a peaceful solution for all parties involved.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Steve Kagen (D-WI)

“Madam Speaker, I deeply regret that I was not able to vote on H. Res. 34 recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza and reaffirming the United States' strong support for Israel , and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. On Wednesday, January 7, 2009, I had surgery on my knee and was not able to be present for voting.

Make no mistake about it, I fully support Israel's right to defend itself against all attacks. I would have wholeheartedly voted for H. Res. 34.

Presently, Israel , like any other country, is exercising its right to self-defense. If any country were attacked like Israel has been they would do the same.

How many attacks on an American city would we tolerate from our neighbors? Zero. In July 2008, I visited Sderot, an Israeli town just over the border from Gaza. I toured sites where Israeli homes were destroyed by rockets launched from Gaza. I met with the U.S. Security Coordinator and understand the daily threat Israelis live with every single day. The constant and deliberate attacks by Hamas on Israeli civilians are unconscionable. The Israeli people must be allowed to go about their daily lives--and the only way to do that is by defending themselves.

The United States has always been and must always be a steadfast ally of Israel . We will support Israel's right to defend itself and continue to push for a return to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

I, like so many throughout the world, hope for a peaceful resolution to the current fighting and look forward to a sustainable peace when Israelis and Palestinians alike can live free from terror.” (*Congressional Record, January 14, 2009*)

Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI)

“Madam Speaker, I rise in support of Israel's right to defend its citizens from the terrorism and extremism of Hamas.

Our government has a responsibility to stand in solidarity with Israel as it endures a difficult moment in its history.

Imagine if an American town or city was hit by a barrage of rocket and mortar attacks? How would we respond? How would we react?

Just as America would not tolerate violence against its people, Israel should not have stand idly by and watch while rockets rain down on its citizens.

Israel has correctly taken steps that will ensure that terrorism against its nation will be punished with the hope that one day its nation can live in peace.

Fifteen Israelis have lost their lives since the beginning of Hamas's rocket and mortar attacks in late December.

While I deplore the cowardly attacks from Hamas against the Israeli people, I am aware of the suffering of Palestinian people living in the Gaza Strip.

Since the conflict began, hundreds of Palestinians civilians have lost their lives.

But make no mistake about it, this conflict was created by Hamas's unwavering commitment to violence against both Israelis and Palestinians.

Since coming to power in 2006, Hamas has done nothing but terrorize Israelis and intimidate the Palestinian people with its iron-fist militancy.

This terrorist organization openly recruits suicide bombers to launch attacks in Israel but in Arab nations as well.

Just last week, a female suicide bomber killed over 100 innocent Iraqi Muslims without causing the slightest outcry from Hamas.

In Gaza, where Hamas has ruled for several years, Palestinians are without decent schools, affordable healthcare and any semblance of a bright economic future.

This is because Hamas's mission is not to lift up Palestinians, it is to inflame passions and stir hatred against the State of Israel.

Hamas represents a great threat to international peace and to the stability of Israel and will continue to do so as long as it remains a significant force in the Middle East.

For too long Hamas has terrorized both Israelis and Palestinians alike. It falsely believes that it can use terrorism and intimidation to bully Israelis to the bargaining table.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

“In the wake of the recent attacks by Hamas, Israel has no choice but to defend its people from violence and extremism.

“With daily rocket attacks against towns in Southern Israel, Hamas falsely believes it can use terrorism and intimidation as a bargaining tool. Israel has every right to defend the safety and security of its citizens from terrorist organizations like Hamas.” (*Public Statement, January 4, 2009*)

Rep. Mary Jo Kilroy (D-OH)

“I stand by Israel’s right to use military action to stop the indiscriminate rocket attacks from Hamas into southern Israel. The action by Hamas to unilaterally end the cease fire has only further escalated the cycle of violence in the region, and put more innocent Israeli and Palestinian families in harm’s way. I strongly urge the incoming Obama administration and international community to work toward a lasting resolution that will allow for a viable and independent Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel.” (*Written Statement, January 12, 2009*)

Rep. Peter King (R-NY)

Washington, DC--Rep. Peter King issued the following statement on the situation in Gaza:

“The U.S. must stand with our ally Israel as it attempts to defeat the Hamas terrorists who continue to launch daily attacks from Gaza against innocent Israelis. While the IDF makes every attempt to minimize civilian casualties, Hamas does just the opposite. Israel's fight is an existential one and until its enemies are defeated it must be allowed to take actions to defend itself.” (*Press Release, December 28, 2008*)

Rep. Steve King (R-IA)

“I thank the gentleman from New York for organizing this Special Order. Even though I have 60 minutes subsequent to this, I appreciate the yield because I would like to say a few words into the *Record* as part of this Special Order.

This support of Israel goes back deep with me. The 1967 war was the year I graduated from high school. I came of age as Israel defended its freedom that they had achieved in 1948. My life has almost transcended, I am going to go through the sequential order--I was born in 1949, Israel was born in 1948.

As I have watched this, as I have watched the courageous defense against enemies that surrounded Israel for all of these years, and I have watched the policies a little bit within Israel itself, it occurs to me that I have trouble finding a historical example where land was traded successfully for peace. I honor the effort that they have made, and I certainly honor and support and will continue to support Israel's effort to defend themselves.

As you have illustrated, rockets firing in from a few miles away, New Jersey into New York, for example, we would not tolerate that. We wouldn't tolerate the second rocket. We wouldn't tolerate the first one. This is thousands of rockets.

So without belaboring the point, I support and endorse the statements that were made in this hour, and I support the resolution, obviously. I will continue to do so and will stand in solidarity across the aisle to stand for freedom. I would submit also that the only place I can see on that map where an Arab can go to get a fair trial would be Israel.” (*Congressional Record, January 14, 2009*)

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Congressman Steve King made the following statement today on the current situation in Gaza.

“We all want peace in the Middle East, but a true agreement that balances Israel’s security concerns with the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people can only be obtained if senseless violence in this region ends.

“When Hamas chose to abandon a six-month peace agreement in favor of rocket attacks against Israel on December 19, Israel rightfully responded to defend its people. An estimated 500,000 Israeli citizens are now within range of Hamas’ rocket arsenal, and each unprovoked attack from Hamas puts thousands of lives at risk.

“Hamas should immediately suspend its attacks and pledge to work with Israel on an agreement bringing peace to this troubled region.” (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Rep. Jack Kingston (R-GA)

“Madam Speaker, when Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza in 2005, the Islamic group Hamas--which does not acknowledge Israel's right to exist--took control over the small strip of land. Since then, relations between Gaza and Israel have steadily deteriorated.

On December 19, Hamas ended the 6-month cease-fire with Israel by launching dozens of rocket attacks into southern Israel, randomly targeting civilian neighborhoods. Eight days later, Israel began a counter defensive of large scale air strikes. Hamas has continually used Gaza as a launching pad for rockets against Israeli cities and has contributed deeply to a reduction in the quality of daily life and the deteriorating humanitarian situation.

I deeply support Israel's right to defend themselves against Hamas attacks. I also hope to see a sustainable cease-fire brokered to save the innocent victims of Hamas' continual instigation of Israel's defensive power.” (*Congressional Record, January 15, 2009*)

Rep. Mark Kirk (R-IL)

“Hamas is a designated terrorist organization responsible for the murders of at least 26 American citizens -- some of them teenagers, children and infants. There can be no moral equivalency between a terrorist organization that targets civilians and a democratically elected government that acts to defend them.” (*Press Release, January 6, 2009*)

Rep. Ron Klein (D-FL)

Boca Raton, FL – Rep. Ron Klein (D-FL), vice-chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee’s Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, has released the following statement concerning the security situation in Israel:

“Once again, Israelis have endured a bombardment of hundreds of rockets on their homes and communities. Israel is doing what any sovereign government in the world would do and

should do: defend its citizens and secure its borders. Hamas' unprovoked actions, which broke the six month ceasefire agreement, clearly demonstrate that Hamas is solely responsible for the death and injuries on both sides. With the incitement and assistance of radical elements in the region, Hamas is destabilizing any chance for peace and security. Israel's actions are justified, and I join all Americans who believe in democracy and freedom in standing by Israel in her time of need." (*Press Release, December 29, 2008*)

Senate Minority Whip Jon Kyl (R-AZ)

"Mr. President, I would like to speak to two subjects. The first deals with a resolution the Senate unanimously adopted this morning.

Mr. President, today the Senate approved a resolution recognizing the right of Israel to defend itself against terrorist attacks from Gaza and reaffirming the United States' strong support for Israel in its battle with Hamas.

The first thing the resolution does is remind people why the State of Israel had to act.

Israel has had to endure more than 6,300 rocket and mortar attacks on its citizens since it fully withdrew from Gaza in 2005. In fact, the town of Sderot, which is about 3 miles from the border of Gaza, has been suffering for over 8 years from these attacks.

Is there any doubt that if the United States were suffering an attack from just across the border similar to what Israel is facing, that we wouldn't react to stop that from happening? I think there is no question that we would act to stop this terrorism, and this resolution expresses the United States' support of Israel's right to defend itself.

The second point the resolution makes is that there is no equivalency between the terrorist actions of Hamas and the defensive actions of Israel . Israel conducts its military operations to spare innocent life. It has specifically targeted Hamas command centers, security installations, rocket-launching sites, weapons stockpiles, and weapons smuggling tunnels. It has tried very hard to avoid civilian casualties. Hamas, on the other hand, deliberately and maliciously fires rockets into civilian areas from civilian areas, thereby making it more difficult for Israel to target the terrorists and increasing the likelihood of civilian casualties when Israel does take action.

Finally, this resolution speaks to calls for a cease-fire. Many voices in the international community have been heard pleading for an immediate cease-fire, although I think it is instructive that one never hears those voices condemning rocket attacks by Hamas terrorists.

I believe the path to a halt in the violence is clear. A cease-fire is appropriate if, and when, it is durable and sustainable. A precipitous cease-fire, on the other hand, that would allow Hamas to rearm and rebuild its support in Gaza is not acceptable. Hamas cannot be given a cease-fire that only serves to provide it breathing room to regroup and then start firing its rockets and missiles again.

By adopting this resolution, we have said to the Israeli people: "We stand with you, and we support you in defending yourselves against terrorists."

In short, the resolution expresses strong support for the defense of Israel by its military action today in the Gaza Strip, the fact that it has been repeatedly attacked by Hamas terrorists from the Gaza Strip, and finally decided that the only way to stop those attacks on its citizens was to go into Gaza and try to remove the weapons and the launching sites and to try to arrest the terrorists who were involved in the launching of those rockets.

This resolution expresses strong support for Israel . It reminds us all why Israel was forced to act. It makes the point that there is no equivalency between the action of the Israelis and the terrorist action of Hamas, which deliberately seeks to harm civilians. Finally, it speaks to the question of a cease-fire, noting that the position of the United States is correctly that a cease-fire could only be supported if it is durable and sustainable; in other words, it ensures that the conditions that created the controversy today are not simply repeated another 6 months from now when the Hamas terrorists have had an opportunity to rearm.

I am pleased the Senate has spoken in such a timely fashion on this important issue. I commend my colleagues for supporting the resolution.” (*Congressional Record, January 8, 2009*)

“Mr. President, I hope--and I am joined here by Senator *Lieberman*--that the Senate will have an opportunity to consider before this week is out a resolution we believe has been drafted by the majority leader and the minority leader that deals with the ongoing war in the Gaza Strip and that we believe needs to express the will of the Senate. We believe as well that a similar resolution would be voted on in the House of Representatives to express the will of the House. So then the whole world--and certainly the administration--would know of this body's strong support for the State of Israel and our support for the actions Israel is taking right now. We hope that vote can occur before this week is out. I wish to commend Senator *Lieberman* for his considerable leadership on this issue.

We support this resolution. The first thing the resolution does is to remind people why the State of Israel had to act.

Last February, on a trip to the Middle East, I visited the Israeli town of Sderot, which is about 3 miles from the border of Gaza, and I learned from the town's mayor of the toll taken on the residents of this town and neighboring cities from more than 8 years of rocket attacks by the Hamas terrorists. At the police station, I saw rack after rack of these spent rockets, the remains of the rockets that had been launched by Hamas against the civilian population of this city. In fact, about 15 minutes after we departed the city, one of these Hamas launched a Qassam rocket--identical to the hundreds we had seen at the police station--which fell on an Israeli home in town, destroying it. Thankfully, no one in that attack was harmed.

Is there any doubt that if the United States were suffering an attack from just across the border similar to this, that we wouldn't react to stop that from happening? I think there is no question that we would act to stop this terrorism. It is our hope that the resolution would express our acknowledgment that a nation has the right to defend itself, that Israel has had to respond to this, to more than 6,300 rocket and mortar attacks on its citizens since it fully withdrew from Gaza in the year 2005. In fact, this town has been suffering for over 8 years from these attacks.

The second point the resolution makes is that there is no equivalency between the actions of Hamas and Israel in this case. Israel conducts its military operations to spare innocent life. They have specifically targeted Hamas command centers and security installations and rocket-launching sites, weapons stockpiles, and weapons smuggling tunnels. They have tried very hard to avoid civilian casualties. In fact, Israel has transmitted very specific warnings to Gazans. They have dropped leaflets and made phone calls to targeted areas to warn citizens to leave because an attack is imminent. This, of course, even means they lose the element of surprise and potentially put the lives of Israeli soldiers at risk. But Israel believes it is important where possible to avoid jeopardizing innocent life--quite the opposite from Hamas, which deliberately and cynically fires rockets from civilian areas to make it more difficult for Israel to target the terrorists and to increase the likelihood of civilian casualties when Israel does take action.

Hamas has ignored a plea by U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on April 28 that:

Civilian areas in Gaza should not be used as a base from which to launch its actions against Israel.

Dozens of mosques in Gaza have been turned into weapons storage facilities and Hamas command centers. In fact, an airstrike on a mosque in the Tel El Hawa neighborhood of Gaza City last Wednesday set off numerous secondary explosions caused by the arms that had been stockpiled in the mosque.

Finally, Hamas openly admits that it uses women and children as human shields. A leading member of Hamas told Al-Aqsa TV on February 29, 2008:

For the Palestinian people, death has become an industry This is why they have formed human shields of the women, the children, the elderly, and the mujahedeen, in order to challenge the Zionist bombing machine.

While targeting terrorists, Israel works to avoid a humanitarian crisis for ordinary Gazans as well. During the first week of Israel's operations, it facilitated the delivery to Gaza of 400 trucks loaded with more than 2,000 tons of food and medicine. This is not easy when you are in the middle of military operations. Ten ambulances and two thousand blood units were transferred to Gaza just in that week. More than 80 Palestinians have entered Egypt for treatment, in addition to a dozen or more who have entered Israel. On January 5, more than 93,000 gallons of industrial diesel fuel and gasoline for vehicles was transferred into Gaza from a fuel depot in Israel. By the way, that fuel depot comes under constant attack from terrorists in Gaza, as does the place where the electricity is generated for Gaza, which, of course, makes absolutely no sense.

Finally, this resolution speaks to calls for a cease-fire. Many voices in the so-called international community have been heard pleading for an immediate cease-fire, although I think it is instructive that one never hears those voices condemning rocket attacks by Hamas terrorists.

I believe the path to a halt in the violence is clear. A cease-fire is appropriate if and when it is durable and sustainable. A cease-fire, on the other hand, that would allow Hamas to rearm and

rebuild its support in Gaza is, of course, not acceptable. Hamas cannot be given a cease-fire that only serves to provide it breathing room to regroup and then a month or 2 months or 3 months from now start firing its rockets and missiles again.

The United Nations could play a constructive role, but it must resist the temptation that it all too often falls into, and that is that of moral equivalency. I point to the press statement of the Security Council on December 28 which, among other things, said the parties should "stop immediately all military activities." This is dangerous moral equivalency. Only one party to the violence carries out "military activities." The other party--Hamas--terrorizes and murders innocent people. That is why the only Security Council resolution that could be acceptable in this situation--and I say this with the understanding that the Security Council is meeting as we meet here today--is one that affirms Israel's right to defend itself and calls on Hamas to immediately stop its terrorist activity.

I add that a Security Council resolution should look to all of those who support Hamas--primarily and most significantly Iran. For years, Iran has been the source of money, training--including training at the facilities of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Iran itself--and weapons to Hamas. Hamas's relationship with Iran is so close that the Egyptian President said this past May that Hamas rule in Gaza means that Egypt has a "border with Iran."

Since Israel launched its military operation against Hamas, Iran has announced stepped-up arms shipments. Senior Iranian clerics have organized recruiting drives to send Iranians to Hamas's aid. Just yesterday, a senior Iranian cleric announced that it had recruited 7,000 Iranians to join the cause of Hamas. Yet the international community has taken no action to counter Iran's support of Hamas terrorists.

A U.N. Security Council resolution sanctioning Iran for its assistance to Hamas would send an important message and would be a good place to start, as would unilateral sanctions by the United States.

Let me conclude by quoting the Washington Post columnist Charles Krauthammer, who recently wrote one of the most precise and succinct observations on the situation in Gaza that I have read. He wrote:

Some geopolitical conflicts are morally complicated. The Israel -Gaza war is not. It possesses a moral clarity not only rare, but excruciating.

The Reid-McConnell resolution we expect to be introduced shortly will be an important reaffirmation of the bond between Israel and the United States. It is one forged on the basis of common values and the tragically shared experience of terrorism. By passing this resolution, we are saying to the Israeli people: We stand with you, and we support you in defending yourselves against terrorist attacks." (*Congressional Record, January 6, 2009*)

Standing with Israel against Terrorists
By U.S. Senator Jon Kyl

"Imagine spending everyday apprehensively waiting for a loud siren to blare, signaling that you have 60 to 90 seconds to find shelter. What would you do? How would you send your

children to school? How would you go to work? It is difficult – if not inconceivable – for most Americans to imagine living their lives like this. Yet, many Israelis have had to live with this threat from Hamas rocket and missile attacks day in and day out for years. In fact, in just the week before Israel launched its recent military operation against Hamas, hundreds of rockets and mortars shells were fired at Israeli civilian-areas, including the firing of 80 rockets on just a single day.

Last February, on a trip to the Middle East, I visited the Israeli town of Sderot, about three miles north of the border with Gaza. I learned from the town's mayor of the toll taken on residents from more than eight years of rocket attacks by Hamas. At the police station I saw rack after rack of the charred remains of rockets and missiles launched by Hamas against the civilian population of Sderot. In fact, not more than 15 minutes after we departed the city, a Hamas-launched Qassam rocket – identical to the hundreds seen at that police station – fell on an Israeli home in Sderot, destroying it, but thankfully, harming no one.

The fundamental obligation of any government is to protect its citizens. It is for that reason that, having exhausted every other option, Israel launched a military operation against the Hamas terrorist organization in the Gaza strip. Israel is justified in taking action against the terrorists who have been attacking its citizens with impunity for years. While we wish to see the violence come to an end, Israel must be allowed to protect itself.

Unlike the terrorist attacks against innocent civilians that Hamas perpetrates, Israel takes every step possible to avoid the deaths of civilians. Hamas launches unguided explosive rockets into Israeli cities like Sderot, striking homes, schools, and hospitals with the explicit purpose of terrorizing the civilian population. Israel, on the other hand, puts its soldiers and pilots into extraordinary danger to avoid accidental harm to civilians in Gaza. Even now, Israel is working to ensure the flow of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian population in Gaza. Don't let anyone ever tell you that the actions of Hamas and Israel are the same. In fact, one reason Palestinian civilians are sometimes killed or injured is that Hamas intentionally locates its facilities and even rocket launch areas near schools and hospitals.

There have been many voices heard in the international community calling for an immediate end to the attacks from both parties. This ignores the fact that every nation has the right to defend itself from terrorists; in fact, it is a basic element of the United Nations Charter. If the international community wants to take action to prevent unnecessary violence, there are two places it should start.

First, Hamas imports the weapons it uses against Israel, primarily by smuggling them through elaborate tunnels between Gaza and Egypt. The United States has taken steps to help the Egyptians find these tunnels and destroy them, but more should be done. The international community should follow our lead by working with the Egyptians to stop this destabilizing arms smuggling by training Egyptian police and military forces, and providing them with surveillance and detection equipment. The international community should also make clear that this support, and other multilateral assistance (like that from the World Bank and IMF), is contingent on Egypt taking concrete steps to cut off all support flowing across the border to aid Hamas. For its part, the United States should condition its \$1.5 billion in annual aid to Egypt on such progress.

Second, nowhere is international action more overdue than in stopping Iran's assistance to Hamas. For years, Iran has been the source of money, training – including training at the facilities of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Iran itself – and weapons to Hamas. Hamas' relationship with Iran is so close that the Egyptian President said this past May that Hamas rule in Gaza means that Egypt has a "border with Iran." Since Israel launched its military operation against Hamas, Iran has announced stepped-up arms shipments. Senior Iranian clerics have organized recruiting drives to send Iranians to Hamas' aid. Yet the international community has taken no action to counter Iran's support of Hamas terrorists. A United Nations Security Council Resolution sanctioning Iran for its assistance to Hamas would send an important message and would be a good place to start.

Americans must support Israel because we understand since 9/11 that terrorism anywhere is a threat to free people everywhere." (*Column, January 5, 2009*)

Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-CO)

"Madam Speaker, Israel has a responsibility to protect its citizens. Hamas has blatantly ignored any cease-fire agreements by assailing Israel with thousands of rocket and mortar attacks during the last 8 years, nearly half during this last year, including the 6-month so-called cease-fire.

Israel has the right to defend its people from terrorist attacks and is only taking the actions currently taken in direct response to Hamas policy.

Madam Speaker, I support this resolution, H. Res. 34 , and I urge its adoption." (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

"Israel has a responsibility to protect its citizens. Hamas has blatantly ignored any ceasefire agreement by assailing Israel with over 6300 rockets and mortars during the last eight years, nearly half within the past year (including the 6 month so-called ceasefire). Israel's action has been a direct response to Hamas policy. We cannot forget Hamas is still regarded as a terrorist organization and publicly committed to destroying Israel. Demonstrating an extraordinary amount of restraint over the past years, Israel has the right to defend its people from terrorist attacks.

"Let us hope that the Palestinian people will not tolerate continued terrorist attacks upon Israel, that there will be no further civilian casualties on either side, and that there will be lasting peace in the region." (*Press Release, January 5, 2009*)

Rep. Leonard Lance (R-NJ)

WASHINGTON -- Rep. Leonard Lance (NJ-07) issued the following statement regarding Israel's retaliation against Hamas in Gaza.

“As a new member of Congress, I am looking forward to working on many national security issues affecting our nation and our allies. I am also looking forward to being a strong advocate for one of America’s strongest allies – Israel.

“Israel is fully entitled to defend herself against terrorist aggressors. No nation can be expected to sit idly by while rockets are fired upon its citizens. Hamas is a terrorist organization and the current conflict cannot be resolved until Hamas stops firing missiles into Israel.” *(Press Release, January 7, 2009)*

Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-LA)

WASHINGTON – United States Senator Mary Landrieu, D-La., today made the following statement about the ongoing conflict in Gaza:

“I continue to closely monitor the unfortunate events in Gaza,” Sen. Landrieu said. “Despite Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 and efforts to advance Israel/Palestine negotiations, Hamas’ attacks into southern Israel have undermined the international peace process and prompted Israel’s current defensive actions.

“I strongly support Israel’s right to security and will work with President-elect Obama’s administration and my colleagues in Congress to promote a lasting peace along the Gaza border and throughout the region. I urge a quick resolution to this situation, beginning with Hamas taking immediate action to halt these attacks and return to good-faith peace negotiations.” *(Press Release, January 7, 2009)*

Rep. Jim Langevin (D-RI)

WARWICK, R.I. – Congressman Jim Langevin today released the following statement about the ongoing Israeli military action in Gaza:

“I have been fortunate to visit Israel on two occasions. My experiences there only strengthened my admiration for this great nation, and my determination to help provide the support Israel needs to ensure a secure and peaceful future for her people.

“Unfortunately, Hamas’s increasing presence in the Gaza Strip has forced Israel to share a border with an organization that has pledged its destruction. With its constant rocket fire attacks on Israel, Hamas has become a clear and present danger to the safety and security of the Israeli people. I stand strongly in support of Israel’s right to defend herself and her citizens from threats and attacks by terrorists.

“As we begin a new year, I am hopeful that all responsible nations will join together to reject terrorism and work harder to ensure peace around the world. I will work in Congress to support efforts to bring peace and stability to our friends in Israel and the region, and I look forward to a resolution that ensures both security and humanitarian needs are met.” *(Press Release, January 8, 2009)*

Rep. John Larson (D-CT)

“Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of House Resolution 34 , a resolution that recognizes Israel's right to defend itself from attacks by Hamas and reaffirms the United States's support of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. I was extremely pleased to join with Speaker *Pelosi*, Republican Leader *Boehner*, and other bipartisan leaders of the House in introducing this important legislation.

Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005 in hopes of reducing violence between Israelis and Palestinians. Unfortunately, just the opposite has occurred. Since Israel's withdrawal, Hamas have terrorized Israel by firing more than 6,000 missiles from Gaza into Israel's southern region. Israel, thankfully, has shown a remarkable level of restraint throughout these attacks. It was not until December 2008, when Hamas brazenly refused to continue a ceasefire, instead choosing to ratchet up its attacks, that Israel used military force in response.

The resolution before us today emphasizes the United States's belief that Israel has the right to self-defense. No other country in the world would or could have shown the level of restraint that Israel has over the past years. Moreover, none should ever be required to.

House Resolution 34 also recognizes the burgeoning humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. While Israel has provided humanitarian assistance throughout this conflict, the situation will not be fully addressed until a stable and lasting peace can be achieved between the Israelis and Palestinians. For that reason, the resolution states the United States's full support of a ceasefire that ends rocket attacks by Hamas, prevents additional arms and explosives from entering Gaza, and jumpstarts a diplomatic initiative in the region.

Madam Speaker, passage of this resolution will send the right message at the right time to our friends in Israel and our allies around the world. I urge its quick passage.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Steven LaTourette (R-OH)

“I am horrified by the onslaught of attacks against Israel. Hamas must immediately halt its attacks. As a nation, we must continue our steadfast support of Israel, one of our greatest allies. Israel has every right to defend itself and its citizens against these terrorist attacks.” (*Public Statement, January 8, 2009*)

Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ)

“Mr. President, I rise to talk about the events that are in front of us and their significance. We are presently sharing in the excitement that surrounds this Capitol and our country at the prospect that President Obama will be taking office and leading this country in a positive fashion.

There is a lot of work to do and a lot of concerns have been brought to our attention. We are reminded by President-elect Obama that people are losing their jobs, and we cannot stand still and let it happen. Prospects are that maybe 500,000 new people a month will be out of work. The economy is fragile and there is not the capital around to get businesses started or to

reverse the course we are on. And health care is of great concern to people who are uninsured and struggling.

At the same time that we are concerned about these things now in our own country, we have international responsibilities that we cannot ignore.

Even as excitement surrounds us here, inspired by the new President, we have to look away from our shores and see what is happening in the Middle East where there is fighting raging between Israel and Hamas . And even while we face domestic problems, we cannot step back from what is happening in the Middle East and the responsibility of America as the leading Nation on our globe. Although I bring this up with some degree of reluctance, we must discuss the situation that we face.

We know that governing is about choices. When we look at the Middle East right now, the choice for Israel is whether Israel steps aside and ignores the attacks on her people that come daily, without provocation.

We have all heard the opinion around the world about how awful the situation in the Middle East is. It is awful. It is terrible. When I see children hurt, when I see them killed, when I see families distressed as their economy worsens, it is a terrible sight.

I was in the Gaza Strip some years ago, bringing good news and financial assistance to the people of the Gaza as they opened a new airport. It was during the time that Arafat was President. There was hope springing up all around that maybe they could get out of the misery that existed in the Gaza Strip and develop an orderly society.

Israel is a democracy in an area of many nations that are less than democratic. When these economies flourish the wealth falls into a few hands, who build their buildings, take their resources, and buy bigger yachts and bigger airplanes for themselves and not for their countries. But there was hope that maybe the Gaza Strip would become a place of opportunity for its people. That is why I was so pleased to be there and to bring the promise of aid upon which we had agreed.

There was no Hamas there at that time. Now, Hamas is there making determinations about its future and the future of the people of the Gaza. Apparently the choice of Hamas is to continue the assault on Israel and to not let discussions take place. I am one of those people who support a two-state commitment there, knowing full well that Israel is a place that could share its knowledge and experience with the people of Gaza. But Hamas refuses to do that. It is a terrorist organization.

I remember a trip I took with several colleagues when we went to Iraq and on the way we stopped in Jordan and Syria, and we spoke to the President of Syria and I asked him to try to curb the activities of Hamas by securing the borders. I said: Why are you encouraging Hamas to find refuge here, have their headquarters here along with Hezbollah? President Asad said: They are a social service organization.

Social service--Mr. President, that is no more a social service organization than the people who attacked us on 9/11; than the people who attacked the British train system; than those who attack innocent people in various countries and cities.

Terrorism is at our throat. We have to be wary. It has changed the way our society functions. Look at all the inspections you go through if you want to catch an airplane or go into public buildings--always with an ID card. We know the results of terrorism. It is to destroy democratic society, take away the choices people have in their lives. It says women have to conduct themselves in a certain way satisfactory and not have rights to participate in financial opportunities for themselves and their families.

And so we look at Hamas and have to ask: Does it really care about the people of Gaza or is it simply dedicated to its terrorist ways? For the answer we can review how Hamas conducts itself.

Once again, I, as a human being, as a person who cares about life and family, I am distressed to see the loss of life that is taking place in Gaza and in Israel. People are injured and frightened to go out of their homes--and yet even their home can be a place where misery prevails.

But Hamas has attacked Israel, firing rockets, and even now, when it is perhaps possible to get a cease-fire, they insist on continuing rocket firing.

We have seen the opinions of countries around the world as they look at this situation. Instead of just criticizing Israel, why isn't it said that Hamas is a terrorist organization that wants to take away people's rights, that wants to permit their innocent citizens to be used as decoys--in schools and mosques and other places--to try to hide the militants who are firing rockets into Israel?

Hamas starts by saying they don't recognize the right of the State of Israel to exist, but Israel has that right and shall defend that right. She has built a society from the sands, a society that flourishes, not just on the economic side, but on the scientific and research side. They have figured out how to grow crops in areas that were arid, and how to develop the technology that Israel is known for.

The practice of medicine is another thing that Israel is known for. There is a facility in Israel that I helped fund, in memory of my father who died as a very young man--43 years old--from cancer. There is a scientist who lived in New Jersey and was a professor at our principal institution, Rutgers University.

And he asked if I would help fund a laboratory and a facility there that did cancer research. I said yes. That was some time ago. I know they have Arab students there and they have Arab professors there and they all cooperate in helping people maintain good health. We have all seen stories in the paper about the young Arab child who came to Israel, brought by her father, to have a heart transplant. In this way Israeli science reaches out to people of all nations and all religions.

Israel has a right to exist, and a right to exist in peace, and would be more than willing to bring in the countries surrounding Israel to participate in programs for peace as it has with medicine. But there cannot be real peace without security. Israel is taking appropriate action to ensure the security of its people, and to ask them to do less is unfair.

It is impossible to say to them that if we had rockets falling on Boston, we would not respond or if we had rockets falling on Newark, NJ, we would not respond.

I can tell you, as a resident of New Jersey where we have a 2-mile strip that is said by the FBI to be the most dangerous 2-mile strip in the country for a terrorist attack, we are constantly on the alert. We have boats there, we have guards all over the place, and we make sure we are ready to defend ourselves.

Not only is Israel defending itself, as we would, against deadly aggression, it is also putting a stop to the psychological warfare that has become a daily part of life for the people in southern Israel. Innocent civilians live with constant fear that a rocket might kill them, their children, or destroy their home.

Israel, like the United States, is determined to protect and safeguard its people. After 9/11, America sought to eliminate threats to our country from Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida. Now Israel is seeking to eliminate threats from ongoing terrorist attacks.

We cannot kid ourselves about the strategy that Hamas used to gain power in Gaza. Hamas built up its image among the Palestinian people by painting itself as a social service provider. But if they really cared about the Palestinian people, they would not use them as human shields, and they would not use the rooftops of homes to launch rocket attacks.

The events of the past few weeks illustrate to the world that terrorist groups cannot be permitted to go on menacing the free world with terror attacks and there are no countries that are safe from this kind of assault.

Hamas has shown that it cares more about destruction than about improving the lives of the people of Gaza. Hamas leaders have chosen to ignore the fact that their people are suffering in poverty and instead have focused exclusively on hurting Israel.

So we ask Hamas : Stand up; show that you do care about your people and stop attacking Israel's citizens.

There will be tense days ahead in Israel and Gaza, and I am deeply concerned about the loss of innocent life, the pain of losing a family member, and injuries that may last for a lifetime.

To put a stop to the loss of innocent life, Hamas must come to its senses and pursue a cease-fire that is sustainable and durable.

Israel should be joined by nations around the world in pursuing a cease-fire because terror is ultimately possible in their own states and their own communities, whether it is in India, whether it is in France, whether it is in Spain, whether it is in the UK, or whether it is in America as we saw on 9/11.

There is only one way to bring real peace and real security to the Middle East: stop the rockets and get the people to the bargaining table.

Negotiations are being attempted with Egypt's active participation. We have to encourage these negotiations.

And it has to be very clear to Hamas and other terrorist organizations that they are not going to win by killing people or by discouraging free thought and democratic values.”
(*Congressional Record, January 13, 2009*)

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (I-CT)

“Mr. President, I wish first to thank my friend and colleague from Arizona, Senator *Kyl*, for the statement he has just made, which was characteristically straightforward, clear, principled, and passionate, about what is involved in the current crisis in Gaza and the opportunity this Congress has to not just stand with our ally, Israel --which is critically important at this moment--but to take yet another stand against terrorism for the rule of law, for democracy, and for the peaceful settlement of disputes. I could not agree more with everything Senator *Kyl* has said. I wish to add just a few words in this regard.

As Senator *Kyl* has indicated, the United Nations Security Council was to convene shortly after 5 this afternoon, about an hour ago. I presume it has convened to hear speakers and consider resolutions on what is happening in Gaza today. Secretary of State Rice has gone there to speak on behalf of the United States, which indicates the importance of these deliberations. She will carry with her the policy of our Government since the outbreak of conflict in Gaza that I think has been strong and principled and consistent with the best of American values and, of course, consistent with our national security interest in the global war on the terrorists who attacked us on 9/11 because what is happening in Gaza is yet another battle front in the larger war against Islamist extremism and terrorism. It is, in another sense, also another battle front in the conflict going on within the Muslim world between the extremists and fanatics and terrorists and the majority of people who are more moderate, more law-abiding, obviously not violent and want to live a safe and a better life.

The Government of the United States has been very clear in articulating a policy which I presume and have confidence will be expressed in these Security Council deliberations tonight and the days to follow. No one wants to see violence occur. Yet, as Senator *Kyl* has said so eloquently, when a country such as Israel has been attacked literally thousands of times with rockets fired from Gaza at innocent civilians over a period of years, a cease-fire is negotiated and it goes on for approximately 6 months--negotiated with great help from Egypt--and then Hamas breaks the cease-fire and begins firing rockets again, the Government of Israel, our democratic ally, essentially said: Enough is enough; we are not going to tolerate this anymore, coming as it is from Hamas which is an openly avowed terrorist group with the aim of destroying the State of Israel.

In response to the violence, there is a natural reflex reaction heard often in world councils, and undoubtedly will be heard at the United Nations Security Council at this hour and the hours to follow, that there ought to be a cease-fire. I think we all have to ask ourselves: What is the end of a cease-fire? Of course, we don't like to see violence occurring, but let's remember this is being done by Israel in the exercise of the right of self-defense.

The Government of the United States--being President Bush and everyone else who has spoken--has made very clear that, yes, the United States wants a cease-fire in the conflict between Israel and Hamas regarding Gaza but not just a cease-fire for the sake of a cease-fire

that one side may follow and the other may not and that simply leads nowhere but back to the conflict that has been occurring.

The U.S. Government has been very clear and principled about the fact that the cease-fire our Government seeks is one that is durable and sustainable; in other words, that represents a real resolution of some of the issues in conflict and that also deals with the smuggling into Gaza of additional weapons which are being used to attack innocent civilians in Israel.

I know Secretary Rice will be expressing exactly this position. Yes, America wants a cease-fire but, no, not one that leads nowhere. We want a cease-fire that is durable and sustainable and will include a ban on smuggling, activities to carry out a ban on smuggling of weapons by Hamas in Gaza.

I am very pleased, very encouraged that as the initial action of this Senate this year, the majority leader, Senator *Reid*, and the Republican leader, Senator *McConnell*, are working together in a bipartisan way--totally bipartisan way--to bring before this body, hopefully in the next day or two, a resolution that does exactly what Senator *Kyl* has said: to express our unwavering commitment to the security, well-being, and survival of the State of Israel and recognizing its right to act in self-defense to protect its citizens against terrorism, that will reiterate again that Hamas must end the rocket and mortar attacks against Israel and hopefully do what the Palestinian Authority has done, which is to accept the right of Israel to exist and renounce terrorism and to begin to work toward a two-state peaceful solution.

This resolution really will, in essence, I think, say, as Senator *Kyl* has said, in this hour of crisis to the people of Israel, our allies, that we will stand with you, and also say to the peace-loving Palestinian people that we stand with you, too, and we continue to support a two-state solution--Israel and a Palestinian state--living in peace one against the other, but the Government of the United States--the Secretary of State, the President, but the Secretary of State who is at the United Nations is not speaking simply for the executive branch of Government but that the Senate, and we have reason to believe our colleagues in the other body, the House, will have an opportunity to say to not just the Israelis we stand with you, but to say to the world community that we as the representatives of the people of America, across party lines, stand together with Secretary Rice as she expresses the position of our Government: Yes, a cease-fire, but only one that is sustainable and durable and deals with the smuggling of additional weapons into Gaza. This will be critically important.

I thank our leaders on both sides. I thank Senator *Kyl* for the work he has done. Again, it has been a privilege to work with him.

I also say in a larger context that there is a lot of speculation about why Hamas broke the cease-fire and initiated the rocket fire against Israel deeper into Israel than they have ever done before. I do think, as Senator *Kyl* suggested, that the answer to that question probably comes as much or more from Tehran than it does from Gaza City and Hamas; that Hamas has become an agent of the Iranian Government. It is trained and supplied by the Iranians and secondarily by the Syrians. Therefore, there is a larger conflict being played out.

Iran is noted by our State Department to be the most significant state sponsor of terrorism. The leaders of Iran regularly not only call for the extermination of the State of Israel, but also lead tens of thousands in Tehran and elsewhere in Iran in chants of "death to America, death

to America.” We have long since learned from the lessons of history that you cannot simply ignore statements that seem so extreme and fanatical that they are unbelievable because very often the people making them do believe them, and given the chance, as we have seen from Osama bin Laden in recent times, who told us throughout the nineties exactly what he intended to do--he happened to have done it on 9/11, but he did it earlier in other places--we have to take these threats seriously.

I want to say that a precipitous cease-fire simply for the sake of a cease-fire will allow Hamas to claim a victory. A victory for Hamas is not simply a victory for Hamas; it is a victory for Iran. And a defeat for Hamas, which is in reach if we allow the Israeli action to continue, is a defeat for Iran and a victory for the United States and for the forces of democracy as against terrorism and for the forces of moderation and the rule of law in the Islamic world as against fanaticism and violence.

This is all that is being played out. This is why I am so encouraged this resolution is coming forward. It is, yes, a statement of support for our ally Israel, but it is also a statement of policy for the Members of the Senate, across party lines, and I hope with an overwhelmingly positive vote that says the security of the United States is on the line in how this conflict ends. We cannot let it end in a way that strengthens Hamas and Iran.

I repeat, there has been a lot of speculation: Did Hamas break the cease-fire because of the end of the Bush administration? There has been some interesting speculation that has said the best thing that could happen for the incoming Obama administration is that Hamas be defeated here because then whatever happens between the new administration and Iran, Iran will not approach that next chapter with a sense of triumphant, but the country would have seen one of its major clients and agents of terrorism defeated.

We have the opportunity to speak to all that on this resolution in the days ahead. Most immediately, I hope we will speak to the Members of the Security Council and in the most direct way say: We stand with President Bush; we stand with Secretary Rice. This is not simply the position of a few people at the top of the executive branch of our Government. This position the American Government has taken with regard to the crisis in Gaza is the position embraced by an overwhelming majority of Members of both parties of both Houses.”
(Congressional Record, January 6, 2009)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senator Joe Lieberman (ID-CT) today issued the following statement regarding the situation in Gaza:

“Over the course of this past year, Israel has endured bombardment by more than 2,900 terrorist rockets and mortar shells, fired indiscriminately and unilaterally by Hamas, with the intention of murdering innocent civilians. After repeated warnings, Israel is now exercising its legitimate right of self-defense to stop these terrorist acts. There should be no doubt that responsibility for the violence we see now falls squarely on Hamas, nor should there be any suggestion of moral equivalency between terrorist acts that target civilians, on the one hand, and legitimate military action that seeks to end these attacks, on the other. The sooner that Hamas abandons its unilateral campaign of terror against Israel, the sooner peace can be restored.” *(Press Release, December 30, 2008)*

Rep. Daniel Lipinski (D-IL)

WASHINGTON, D.C.- Congressman Dan Lipinski today issued the following statement regarding the security situation in Israel.

“Israel is one of America’s strongest, most important allies. Our two nations share fundamental moral and political values based on freedom and democracy.

“Last year, Israel continued its important work toward achieving sustainable peace in the Middle East by accepting a proposal for a six-month cease-fire with Hamas. At the same time, this agreement provided Hamas with an opportunity to embrace a peaceful means to resolving its differences with Israel.

“Unfortunately, Hamas utilized the six month cease-fire to significantly boost its arsenal, which culminated in renewed rocket assaults on southern Israel. In fact, more than 600 rockets and mortars have been fired from Gaza at innocent civilians in Israel over the past six weeks and almost 500,000 Israelis live with the constant risk of attack.

“Like every other sovereign nation, Israel not only has the right but the duty to defend its citizens from attack. It is clear that Hamas' actions left Israel with no choice but to take action.

“While I strongly believe all parties involved must work towards sustainable peace, the continued attacks on Israel by Hamas significantly undermine this effort, threaten the overall security in the region, and greatly exacerbate the humanitarian situation for those living in Gaza.

“My thoughts and prayers are with all the innocent victims of this crisis.” (*Press Release, January 7, 2009*)

Rep. Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Representative Frank A. LoBiondo (NJ-02) issued the following statement in support of the state of Israel during the current conflict with the terrorist organization Hamas.

“The current conflict is a direct result of Hamas’ decision to break the ceasefire agreement and relentlessly engage in violent rocket attacks on civilian targets from areas relinquished by Israel in their ongoing efforts to achieve a peaceful compromise. The responsibility to end the violence is on Hamas to stop the terrorist attacks and work in good faith towards a resolution,” said LoBiondo, a member of the House Republican Israel Caucus. “The U.S. and Israel have long been close allies, and those regional issues that threaten Israel, threaten American interests. I will continue to stand strong with Israel in support of their right to defend its citizens and territory.”

Throughout his career, LoBiondo has consistently voted in support of Israel’s right to protect itself. (*Press Release, January 6, 2009*)

Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY)

“Madam Speaker, I rise today as a proud cosponsor and strong supporter of H. Res. 34 , a Resolution ``Recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the U.S.'s strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.”

I believe unequivocally that Israel has the right and responsibility to defend itself and its citizens. I stand in support and solidarity with Israel's efforts to end Hamas' campaign of terror. For years, Hamas has fired thousands of rockets into Israel, murdering Israeli civilians and terrorizing peaceful communities. Earlier this year I traveled to the Western Negev and saw first-hand the trauma suffered by women and children who faced nearly daily rocket attacks from Gaza. While war is never a preferred option, after repeated calls to Hamas to end rocket attacks, Israel had no choice but to respond militarily to Hamas' breaking of the cease-fire.

During its operation in Gaza, Israel has taken extraordinary steps to prevent civilian casualties, including providing advanced warning to civilians about pending attacks of Hamas targets. I am dismayed and disgusted with Hamas' tactics of co-locating their terrorist infrastructure amongst the civilian population. My heart goes out to the families of the innocent civilians killed and wounded on both sides of the conflict; however, Hamas bears the responsibility for the loss of life and the humanitarian situation of residents of Gaza.

Hamas, which continues to deny Israel's right to exist, will stop at nothing to deny peace to the region, including exploiting and endangering Gaza civilians. I believe that Israel's operation to dismantle Hamas's terrorist infrastructure will provide space to reinvigorate support for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. It is my hope that the Israeli operation will make it clear to Hamas that its attacks on Israeli communities must end so that negotiations toward a peaceful coexistence in the region can continue.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

“Continued and intensified missile and mortar attacks from Gaza into Southern Israel threaten the security of innocent families in Israel and Gaza. Hamas, which continues to deny Israel's right to exist, will stop at nothing to deny peace to the region, including exploiting and endangering Gaza civilians. Israel has the right and responsibility to defend itself and its citizens from these ruthless attacks by striking the terrorist infrastructure in Gaza. It is my hope that this week's events will make clear to Hamas that its attacks on Israeli communities must end so that negotiations toward a peaceful coexistence in the region can continue.” (*Press Release, December 28, 2008*)

Rep. Dan Lungren (R-CA)

The loss of life which is occurring currently in Gaza and Israel is a terrible tragedy. We should understand how this tragedy occurred and who is responsible for it.

Hamas broke the cease-fire that existed between the Palestinians in Gaza and Israel when they decided to launch rockets into the sovereign nation of Israel. This marked a departure from a

brief period of time in which there was this cease-fire which seemed to present some opportunity for hope in resolving the terrible differences that exist between those living in Gaza and those in Israel.

Let's be clear about this. My wife and I were in Israel three years ago during the very week when the Israeli government turned over the responsibility for governance of Gaza to the Palestinian Authority. Subsequent to that, Hamas took over, and Hamas has since been engaged in a series of attacks on Israel. These attacks are not for the purpose of bringing them to the negotiating table. They are not for the purpose of somehow trying to resolve the differences that may exist there. But rather, the attacks continue for the expressed purpose of attempting to eradicate the state of Israel and to ensure that there is no state of Israel.

This is unacceptable.

Every sovereign nation, including Israel, has the right to defend itself. One has only to ask oneself what would happen here in the United States if we were attacked by one of our neighbors along our borders. Even though that sounds incredible, imagine if Mexico or Canada started to launch rockets and missiles into the United States, aimed not at military targets, but aimed at civilian populations for the sheer purpose of attempting to cause terror among the population of the United States, to cause destruction of property and death of innocent civilians. We would not have to deliberate for long before responding. We would probably not only respond in kind, but also make sure that we took out those who were attempting to launch such attacks as well as those who supported them, while destroying any such infrastructure facilitating those attacks.

That is essentially what Israel is doing. They have a right to self defense. And we should never, ever forget it.

Again, I recall three years ago being in Israel when the decision was made to turn the responsibility for governance over to the Palestinian Authority. It was a controversial decision within the population of Israel. Ariel Sharon, in one of his last acts as Prime Minister, okayed this.

I recall meeting with him with other members of Congress in what was probably the last meeting Ariel Sharon held with a congressional delegation, shortly after he had been condemned by some in the Knesset for taking this step. Sharon was told that he was basically putting Israel in danger. His response was that he thought it was worth the risk, if it could lead to peace. Unfortunately, this effort at peace by the Israeli government and by the Israel people has had a response by those who rule in Gaza – that is, Hamas – that has been anything but peaceful.

That is the unfortunate tragedy that is unfolding. A step toward peace, a good faith effort to attempt to move beyond war and conflict, has been received, not as such an effort, but rather as an invitation to engage in even more violence.

We should all remember who is responsible for this latest round of tragedy and violence in that very volatile part of the world. It is not the Israeli government or the Israeli people. It is, in fact, Hamas. And Hamas should be held accountable for this.

It is my hope and my prayer that somehow this conflict will be resolved. That in the end Hamas will no longer be able to launch such attacks upon the people of Israel. That the peace-loving Palestinians in Gaza and other areas, such as the West Bank, will decide that Hamas is, in fact, not their leadership. And that they will turn toward peaceful means and negotiations so that they can move forward in bettering their own people and improving their living standards, giving them the opportunity to seek what we all seek: a peaceful live for ourselves and our children. *(Press Release, December 30, 2008)*

Rep. Connie Mack (R-FL)

WASHINGTON – Congressman Connie Mack (FL-14) today blasted Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez for expelling the Israeli ambassador to Venezuela and for calling Israel’s fight against Hamas “genocidal,” stating his actions will have repercussions for Latin America and beyond.

Mack, a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and an outspoken critic of Hugo Chavez, said:

“By expelling the Israeli ambassador to Venezuela, Hugo Chavez is showing the world he is a true anti-Semite and that his ties to Iran continue to grow. His overt support of Hamas is dangerous and will have repercussions for freedom around the world.

“Chavez’s support of Islamic Fundamentalism as a means to protect and extend his Bolivarian revolution – coupled with his alliance with known terrorist organizations like the FARC, Hamas and Hezbollah – show that he is an enemy of freedom and democracy and is destroying the hopes and dreams of the people of Venezuela and Latin America.

“Israel is one of our staunchest allies in the war on terror and one of the only democracies in the Middle East. Israel has a right to defend itself. It’s as simple as that. Hugo Chavez was wrong to expel the Israeli ambassador and he’s wrong to support Hamas.” *(Press Release, January 7, 2009)*

Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY)

“I thank my good friend and colleague from the great city and State of New York for yielding to me. And I am pleased to join him in this Special Order expressing our support for Israel .

After 8 years of constant missile fire, Israel had to take action against Hamas. Every nation has the right, and I would say the duty, to defend its citizens from missile fire.

For the last 8 years, more than 10,000 rockets have fallen on Israel's civilian population centers. This reign of terror has killed 28 people and injured more than 700 and traumatized tens of thousands. Any country that remained quiet in the face of such an onslaught would be failing its people and running away from its responsibility to its citizens.

Israel had to act. And when Hamas announced that it was ending the so-called lull and began an active campaign against Israel's population centers, Israel had no choice. I say “so-called”

because nearly 400 missiles fell on Israel during that period. Hamas did not allow Israel a single month of peace.

I am proud that on Friday, January 9, as one of our first actions of the 111th Congress, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly voted in favor of a strong resolution that places the blame for the situation in Gaza exactly where it belongs, squarely on the shoulders of Hamas. Our resolution makes clear that Israel has a right to defend itself and that the path to peace in the region lies in the recognition of Israel's right to exist, the dismantling of Hamas's terrorist infrastructure, and the release of Gilad Shalit. I want to congratulate Speaker *Pelosi*, the author of our resolution, for having the courage to put before Congress such a clear statement of support.

In 2005, Israel withdrew entirely from the Gaza Strip; Israel gave the land back to the Palestinian Authority. Instead of using the opportunity, Hamas has squandered its resources, preferring to spend capital on developing weapons and smuggling tunnels rather than investing in the country and its economic future.

Rocket and mortar attacks on Israel increased by 500 percent after Israel withdrew completely from the Gaza Strip. The world sat silent as those missiles fell. There was no U.N. resolution condemning Hamas, not even after Hamas repeatedly violated the cease-fire. There were no international conferences to discuss what to do about the flight of the Israeli families. There was no call to defend Israeli children caught in the missiles' path. There were no human rights organizations worrying about the growing signs of post traumatic stress syndrome among the residents of Israel's south. The silence was thundering. In the meantime, Hamas smuggled even more powerful weapons into Gaza.

The number of Israelis who live under threat has grown as the range and strength of the missiles has improved. In recent days, Hamas missiles have hit a kindergarten in Ashdod and a high school in Beersheba. Both were empty at the time, but the loss of life could have been devastating.

Nearly one million Israelis now listen for the sirens signaling a red alert. They have 15 seconds--about as much time as it takes me to utter this sentence--to reach shelter. Hamas has always targeted civilians, preferring to kill women and children instead of trying to take out military targets. At the same time, Hamas violates international law by using its own civilian population as human shields, knowing that it wins the PR war as the body counts rise. By contrast, Israel builds shelters and early warning systems to try to protect its citizens.

Hamas is displaying the irresponsible acts of madmen and cowards, not rulers who can hope to lead a nation. The United States will not accept a return to a situation in which Israelis are living with daily missile fire. I hope the international community will join us in taking a strong stand against the actions of Hamas.

I would like to yield back to my distinguished colleague and thank him for coming before us tonight with such a thoughtful presentation.” (*Congressional Record, January 14, 2009*)

“Madam Speaker, I rise to express my support for H. Res. 34 .

The resolution places the blame for the situation in Gaza exactly where it belongs, squarely on the shoulders of Hamas.

It makes clear that Israel has a right to defend itself and that the path to peace in the region lies in the recognition of Israel's right to exist, the dismantling of Hamas' terrorist infrastructure and the release of Gilad Shalit.

For the last eight years, more than 10,000 missiles have fallen on Israel's civilian population centers, killing 28, injuring more than 700 and traumatizing tens of thousands.

Hamas violates international law by embedding its weapons in civilian centers and using its people as human shields.

Its cynical choice to reap public relations success from the bodies of their own civilians is reprehensible.

These are the irresponsible acts of madmen and cowards, not rulers who can hope to lead a nation.

I hope that President-elect Obama will be willing to spend political capital in calling upon the international community to work together to prevent Hamas from rebuilding.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution and to take a strong stand against the morally bankrupt actions of Hamas.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

“Israel has the right to defend itself. Hamas cannot be allowed to fire rockets into Israeli territory, putting at risk innocent civilians, without facing the consequences. The United States should stand with Israel as it weakens the terrorist organization’s capabilities to launch these attacks. Hamas must end its destructive campaign against Israel so that negotiations to achieve a lasting peace can resume.” (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

State Representative Josh Mandel (R-OH)

“In August 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew from the Gaza Strip and closed its own settlements to turn the land over to the Palestinians. In June 2007, Hamas overthrew the Palestinian leadership to set up an illegitimate government in Gaza, and since that time thousands of rockets have been fired into Israel. An Egyptian brokered cease-fire was in place from June 2008 to December 2008, and upon the expiration of that cease fire, Hamas launched hundreds more rockets into Israel. For many years the terrorist group Hamas has attacked innocent Israeli civilians. Israel not only has a right, but indeed a duty, to defend its citizens against these terrorist attacks. Just like Americans demand that our government fight terrorists until the threat against our citizens is eliminated, Israel has the same obligation to its citizens. America and Israel are in a fight against a common enemy, Islamic Jihadists, and both governments are right in fighting to eliminate this common threat to our democracies and innocent citizens.” (*Press Statement, January 7, 2009*)

Rep. Kenny Marchant (R-TX)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congressman Kenny Marchant (TX-24) released the following statement in support of Israel’s right to defend itself from Hamas’ unprovoked rocket attacks:

“I, in no uncertain terms, provide my staunch and steadfast support to Israel, as a Democratic ally and friend of the United States, in their effort to protect their citizens and territory from unprovoked and indiscriminate rocket attacks.

“As a member state of the United Nations, Israel’s measured response in defending herself is appropriate and justified, and should be rightly viewed as an act of self defense.

“ Hamas revealed its true intentions – to destroy the State of Israel – when it launched thousands of rockets from Gaza into nearby Israeli neighborhoods injuring and killing innocent civilians. Lasting peace with its neighbors, Israel’s long-coveted goal, cannot be achieved if Hamas continues to sanction acts of terror against the Israeli people.

“The humanitarian crisis and any further loss of innocent civilian life can be averted if Hamas ceases its gratuitous acts of vengeance upon Israel.”

“Unfortunately, as many have said before, the Palestinian people will only have peace when their desire for a healthy and prosperous future living at peace with their neighbors is stronger than their desire to destroy Israel.” *(Press Release, January 6, 2009)*

Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA)

“Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support for H. Res. 34 , a resolution recognizing Israel's right to defend itself, reaffirming the United States support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

I am deeply concerned about the situation in Gaza, and I am deeply saddened by the loss of innocent life on both sides. Every innocent death or injury in this conflict is a tragedy.

The United States must play a central role in bringing the parties together to stop the violence, and must forcefully engage to restart the peace process so that the dream of two states living side by side in peace finally can be made a reality. For too many years, the war in Iraq has distracted the United States from what should be its number one priority in the Middle East: bringing peace to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Finding a just, lasting, and equitable solution to the conflict is not only vital for Israelis and Palestinians; it is also very much in our national interest. I am very hopeful that the incoming Obama administration will reengage the United States at the highest levels to complete the peace process.

The resolution we are considering today appropriately recognizes the fact that Hamas has been designated by the United States as a terrorist organization. Hamas continues to reject the very right of Israel to exist and refuses to renounce violence. Hamas has launched thousands of rockets and mortars against Israeli population centers since 2001. Instead of laying the foundation for an independent state following Israel's withdrawal from Gaza more than three

years ago, Hamas turned Gaza into a launch pad for rockets targeting Israeli civilians. Hamas has launched more than 6,000 rockets and mortars at Israel since Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005.

Israel has the right and obligation to protect its citizens from the thousands of rockets that have rained down on its cities and towns since Israel's withdrawal from Gaza. These rocket attacks must stop.

Hamas is not only indiscriminately firing rockets at Israeli civilians; it is also damaging the future for all Palestinians who seek a normal life for themselves and their families. Peace will only result from a political process of engagement and negotiation, not from volleys of rockets.

The incoming Obama Administration has a golden opportunity to breathe new life into the peace process, and I am committed to working with President Obama to stop the violence, get the peace process back on track and establish the security that all residents of the region urgently need. Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the resolution.”
(*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

“Rather than laying the foundation for an independent state following Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza more than three years ago, Hamas instead turned Gaza into a launch pad for rockets targeting Israeli civilians. Israel has the right and obligation to protect its citizens from the thousands of rockets that have rained down on its cities and towns since Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza in 2005. These rocket attacks must stop. Hamas is not only indiscriminately firing rockets at Israeli civilians; it is also damaging the future for all Palestinians who seek a normal life for themselves and their families. Peace will only result from a process of engagement and negotiation, not from volleys of rockets. The loss of innocent life on both sides is deeply saddening. Clearly, the United States must forcefully engage to restart the peace process so that the dream of two states living side by side in peace finally can be made a reality.” (Press Release, January 5, 2009)

Rep. Jim Marshall (D-GA)

“I, along with most other Members of the House, have often expressed my support for Israel's right to defend itself against acts of terrorism. Though I am not on the ground in Gaza and cannot measure what success Israel has had in its attempts to put an end to the thousands of rocket attacks that have been directed at its civilians, it certainly has a right to attempt this. A weaker Hamas might encourage more moderate elements among the Palestinians and would at the very least have a more difficult time resuming the launching of its rockets.

The U.S. and other nations have insisted that Israel minimize civilian casualties. Israel certainly has the same objective. I hate what's going on now. But I hate even more this century long cycle of violence that has gripped this region. Somehow we must break it. The U.S. must assume a stronger leadership role in that effort.” (Written Statement, January 13, 2009)

Sen. Mel Martinez (R-FL)

“Mr. President, the first and most sacred duty of any government is providing for the safety and security of its citizens.

Hamas's repeated rocket attacks on the Israeli people created a situation that required an Israeli response.

I was pleased to join my colleagues in cosponsoring S. Res. 10, which recognizes Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza.

While diplomacy is always a preferable alternative, at some point any legitimate government must take the necessary actions to safeguard its people from acts of terrorism against an unarmed civilian population.

With more than 6,000 rocket attacks launched into Israel from Gaza, the Israeli government acted reasonably in an effort to end the attacks against civilian targets.

These attacks are Hamas' latest attempts to advance their cruel and murderous agenda.

Hamas first began as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, a terrorist group responsible for the assassination of Egypt's President Anwar Sadat.

As you might recall, Sadat was the first Arab President willing to make peace with Israel.

Hamas has since claimed the lives of countless others throughout the region.

In 2002, a Hamas suicide bomber killed five Americans and four Israelis who were eating lunch in the cafeteria at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The bomb was smuggled in a backpack loaded with shrapnel, which maximized damage to the cafeteria and inflicted severe injuries on more than 80 students.

Since coming to power politically in 2006, the terrorist organization has hijacked the Palestinian people's agenda.

They have cynically used their own people as civilian shields and brought harm to those who do not share their radical views. During the June 2007 coup in Gaza, Hamas operatives killed a cook of Palestinian National Authority President Mahmoud Abbas by throwing him from the roof of a 15-story building with his hands and feet tied. In the current conflict, they have fired rockets at their own people. On December 26, two Palestinian girls aged 5 and 13 were killed when a rocket fell short of reaching an Israeli target.

Hamas openly admits it uses women and children as human shields. One Hamas leader described this appalling practice by saying, “For the Palestinian people, death has become an industry. This is why they have formed human shields of the women, the children, [and] the elderly.”

Instead of investing in their own people's well-being, in roads, schools, and hospitals, they have instead invested in the cache of weapons they are using to cause death and destruction in Israel .

As a result, Palestinians are suffering. They have limited access to basic needs such as food and medicine. Their free speech has been suppressed through violence. And their right to freely practice religion has been replaced by a strong-armed enforcement of a radical brand of Islam.

The largest beneficiary of Hamas's weapons purchases has been Iran, which has aided Hamas by training terrorists and offering advice in making deadly explosives and long-range rockets. Throughout the conflict, Hamas has turned into a Hezbollah-like Iranian proxy by threatening Israel from the south. Iran's willingness to embolden terrorist organizations like Hamas poses a serious threat not only to Israel , but also the United States.

While Iran's influence has been plainly apparent across the Middle East, they have surreptitiously worked to advance their anti-American agenda in our own hemisphere. In recent years, Iran has aggressively increased its Latin American presence by working with the leaders who have found a commonality in the Iranian President's radical ways.

Iran and the regimes of nations like Venezuela and Cuba may not share a common border, but they share an anti-American agenda that poses a tremendous risk to our Nation's security.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad first visited Venezuela in 2006 and has since returned to visit the leaders of Cuba, Nicaragua, and Bolivia. He has also hosted Latin American leaders in Tehran.

As a result of these meetings, Iran has entered into several economic and political agreements, including plans to finance new progovernment television and radio stations in Bolivia and countries throughout the region. These agreements help to fan the flames of anti-Americanism, which persists throughout the region.

The government of Argentina recently revealed they received \$1 million from the Cuban regime to pay for anti-American protests during President Bush's visit there in 2005. Cuban families could have used that money for food, but instead it was wasted on furthering the regime's anti-American agenda.

What has been lost on these Latin American leaders is the larger conflict at hand.

Iran is heavily invested in a conflict that has claimed the lives of countless innocent civilians, and they will stop at no cost, continuing to aid in the destruction of American allies.

For our Nation, the next few weeks will be historic, but critical.

I am anxious to hear about President-elect Obama's plan to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and I am hopeful his administration will continue to reaffirm the U.S.'s historic commitment to the people of Israel .

I am also hopeful the administration will continue efforts to persuade Syria to stop yielding to Iran's devious demands. Syria must understand that Iran's interests do not serve the interests of the people of the Middle East.

Egypt has taken significant measures in trying to stop Hamas's smuggling of weapons and militants from Egypt into Gaza, but they must do more.

One proposal I support deploys an international force of military engineers to monitor and destroy the tunnels along the Egyptian border near Gaza.

I would also encourage the new administration to continue working vigorously with the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations on the U.N.-sanctioned "Annapolis Process" to achieve a final status agreement between Arabs and Israelis that includes a viable, democratic Palestinian state living in peace with Israel and its neighbors.

And finally, I hope to see further progress in our efforts to train the Palestinian Presidential Guard led by U.S. General Keith Dayton.

Although the recent outbreak of violence in Israel is troubling, I am hopeful a new cease-fire agreement can be reached very soon.

A true cease-fire with Hamas should include a guarantee for no more rockets and safeguards against rearming.

Both sides will soon realize that further loss of innocent life is too great a cost, and peace and security is the only viable way forward.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee and the new administration to find a way forward in Israel and ensure a plan for peace in the future."
(Congressional Record, January 13, 2009)

Orlando, FL – U.S. Senator Mel Martinez today issued the following statement about the ongoing fighting in southern Israel and Gaza.

"Israel has a right to defend itself and its citizens. Terrorist organizations like Hamas cannot be allowed safe haven in any territory. I'm deeply concerned about the civilian casualties and remain hopeful a new cease fire agreement can be reached very soon." *(Press Release, December 30, 2008)*

Rep. Doris Matsui (D-CA)

"Israeli and Palestinian civilians deserve the same thing as all people: to raise their families in peaceful communities free from and unthreatened by violence. However, as long as Hamas engages Israel only with terrorism and rocket fire, prospects for peace will dim while people and families suffer. This is unacceptable for Israel and for the United States, which will continue to support Israel's right to defend itself and its citizens from attack. At the same

time, Gaza must not become the scene of a humanitarian catastrophe, just as it must not be allowed to serve as a base for firing rockets at Israel.

“With this in mind, I urge the international community, Hamas’s militants, and the Israeli government to agree to a cease-fire that halts hostilities and addresses the urgent humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The ultimate goal of such a cease-fire must be to lead to a sustainable peace agreement that dismantles Hamas’s terrorist infrastructure, eases the alarming humanitarian situation in Gaza, and guarantees the safety and security of innocent Israelis and Palestinians alike. Achieving peace through a renewed emphasis on diplomacy and negotiation is critical in order to craft a long-term settlement that strengthens Israel’s security, improves Palestinians’ quality of life, and breaks the region’s cycle of violence and suffering.” (*Press Release, January 7, 2009*)

Sen. John McCain (R-AZ)

U.S. Sen. John McCain denounced the escalation of Israeli violence in the Gaza Strip Monday, but added that he has seen Israel's residents running to shelters to escape border violence, too.

“If we were being shelled from across our border, the American people would have demanded action,” McCain said during an interview with The Daily Courier's editorial board Monday. (*The Daily Courier, December 29, 2008*)

Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY)

“After months of violent rocket attacks from the Hamas-controlled region of Gaza, Israel is exercising its right to defend itself. The acts of aggression against Israel will no longer be tolerated. Israel is one of our nation's greatest allies and the United States remains committed to standing with Israel to ensure security for its citizens and promoting peace in the region. It is my hope that the current conflict will come to a quick and peaceful resolution.” (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY)

“This resolution in support of the State of Israel has strong bipartisan support. Hamas is a terrorist organization. It clearly started this current conflict by launching rockets on to civilian sites in Israel. The Israelis, as the Majority Leader has indicated, are responding exactly the same way we would if rockets were being launched into the United States from Canada or Mexico or some situation like that. The Israelis have every right to defend themselves against these acts of terrorism. And so I enthusiastically support this, as does Senator Lugar, our Ranking Member on the Foreign Relations Committee.” (*Congressional Record, January 8, 2009*)

“Hamas is a terrorist organization. Imagine in this country if somebody from a neighboring country were lobbing shells at our population. We'd do exactly the same thing. I think the

Israelis are doing the only thing they can possibly do to defend their population.” (*ABC’s This Week with George Stephanopoulos, January 4, 2009*)

Rep. James McGovern (D-MA)

“I believe the international community must press for an immediate cease-fire. A cease-fire would allow humanitarian assistance to be delivered most effectively and facilitate the revitalization of the peace process.

“I believe that the United States has dis-engaged from this process for far too long. President-elect Obama should indicate that he will appoint a Special Envoy to the region to revitalize stalled peace negotiations and to demonstrate the United States’ commitment to finding a long-term two-state solution.

“Every nation, including Israel, has the right to defend itself from attack. Hamas’s continued rocket attacks against Israeli civilians are unacceptable. Hamas should have agreed to extend the recently expired cease-fire. They must also recognize Israel’s right to exist and drop their objection to negotiate a two-state solution.” (*Press Release, January 2, 2009*)

Rep. John McHugh (R-NY)

Congressman John McHugh released the following statement today on the situation in Gaza:

“As a sovereign nation, it is clearly within Israel’s rights to act in its own self-defense against all terrorist actions. The safety and security of Israel’s citizens must be its preeminent concern, and indiscriminate rocket and mortar attacks on Israeli civilians cannot be tolerated. Israel is a close ally and friend to the United States, and I strongly condemn the actions of Hamas, particularly given the serious and lasting impact this has on the Middle East peace process.” (*Press Release, December 29, 2008*)

Rep. Michael McMahon (D-NY)

“Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 34 , this bipartisan legislation sponsored by our Congressional leadership and to stand with Israel and its efforts to protect innocent Israeli civilians against attacks by Hamas.

No country would permit attacks against innocent people, regardless of the political agenda or concerns that motivate such actions, and we in the international community cannot do so here.

We all know Israel as a country of peace, and the only way Israel and its neighbors will be able to enjoy a true and lasting peace will be through the agreed upon process working toward a two-state solution. We cannot let a group of terrorist extremists derail the hard work that our President, Israel, and leaders throughout the region have worked so hard to achieve.

In their oath of loyalty, members of Hamas declare that “death in the cause of God is their supreme desire.” And since Hamas unilaterally decided to breach its agreed upon truce and

renew its attacks on Israel on December 24, we have seen the horrors that occur when this extreme ideology is put into effect against innocent people--both Israeli and Palestinian alike.

Residents of Israeli communities near Gaza have endured over 6,000 rockets crossing into their borders, threatening their lives, and breaching a 6-month cease-fire.

Hamas continues to concentrate its bases of operations close to Palestinian residential neighborhoods and humanitarian centers--sometimes even firing rockets from rooftops of school buildings.

And while there are some who say that Hamas is merely a problem just for Israel, Hamas' utter disregard of innocent human life ultimately affects us all here in the United States, and all peace-loving people around the world.

In the face of increasing international terror, we in the United States must condemn the actions of Hamas. Hamas refuses to employ peaceful methods in dealing with Israel and refuses to acknowledge its right to exist.

The unyielding disregard for human life that Hamas displays is not only a terrorist strategy against Israel, but an ideology that Hamas strives to spread to others in that region and to the global community as a whole.

Israel has an absolute right to defend its citizens and borders. I therefore urge my colleagues to support House H. Res. 34 , stand by our friend and ally Israel, and condemn Hamas for obstructing the basic human rights of both groups and the road to a peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

“I stand with the people of Israel in their fight against terrorism and Hamas and support the ability of the government of Israel to protect its citizens from attacks launched from Gaza.” (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA)

(Washington, D.C.) Today, Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers issued the following statement regarding the escalating military action in Gaza:

“Israel is taking the right and necessary steps to defend its citizens and territory. Israel’s full military response against Hamas’ terrorist attacks is justified, just as the United States would respond to a terrorist attack on its soil. I urge Hamas to stop its attacks on Israel, honor the ceasefire agreement and work to establish a peaceful and long lasting resolution.” (*Press Release, January 6, 2009*)

Rep. Jerry McNerney (D-CA)

“Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to express my concern about events in Israel and Gaza, and my support for Israel’s right to defend itself against rocket attacks launched from

the Hamas controlled Gaza Strip. The region must have a meaningful resolution that will permanently end these rocket attacks and open a pathway to alleviate civilian suffering and develop a secure and prosperous Palestinian society. Hamas' rocket attacks targeting civilians triggered the current crisis. Any country is compelled to defend its civilians against attack.

“The situation in the region has reached a new level of violence, and each civilian death is tragic. The images of suffering innocents, especially children, in both the Gaza Strip and Israel are a stark reminder that it is long past time for this region to know peace. The United States must be deeply involved in the peace process while vigorously working for short and long term solutions that will provide security to Israel and the means for a better future to Palestinians.” (*Congressional Record, January 8, 2009*)

Rep. Kendrick Meek (D-FL)

MIAMI GARDENS, FL – Congressman Kendrick B. Meek (D-FL) issued the following statement today regarding on-going events in Israel and the Gaza Strip:

"Following Israel's historic disengagement from Gaza in 2005, Hamas has never relented in its quest to terrorize Israel and all of her citizens. Hamas' charter still calls for the destruction of Israel and rejects any peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A Palestinian government that includes an armed Hamas undermines the safety of the Palestinian people and threatens the future of the peace process.

"For years, Hamas militants have indiscriminately fired rocket attacks killing innocent Israeli and Palestinian civilians living on both sides of the border. Since Saturday, Hamas has fired more than 100 rockets and mortar shells at Israeli towns and villages. Palestinians must understand that Gaza will not be allowed to be a haven for terrorists to attack Israel.

"Israel is justified in protecting its citizens against these acts of terror and has every right to secure its borders. I ask all Americans to stand in solidarity with Israel in its defense of democracy and freedom."

U.S. Rep. Kendrick B. Meek represents the 17th Congressional District of Florida which includes parts of Miami-Dade and Broward Counties. He serves as the lone Floridian sitting on the House Committee on Ways and Means, and also sits on the House Armed Services Committee. (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Rep. Charlie Melancon (D-LA)

“I stand firmly with Israel as it exercises its right of self-defense against the terrorist group, Hamas. Israelis have endured a bombardment of hundreds of rockets on their homes and communities. Their government has the right and the responsibility to protect its citizens and its borders. Hamas' unprovoked actions, which broke the six month ceasefire agreement, make them solely responsible for the death and injuries on both sides. The world must stand with Israel as it rightfully acts to protect the security of its citizens against the Gaza-based terrorists.” (*Press Release, January 7, 2009*)

Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ)

“Mr. President, a few days ago, we all counted down the final seconds of 2008. In Israel they had something else to count all through last year. From January until December of 2008, a terrorist group launched more than 3,262 rockets and mortar shells into Israeli cities. These were deliberate acts of violence, provocation, and murder. The group responsible was Hamas. Hamas is a terrorist organization founded on one principal goal: destroying the state of Israel . Its charter says there is no value to international conferences, political initiatives, or dialogue. It says there is only one approach to the political situation in the Middle East, and that is jihad.

So it was no surprise when the terrorist group Hamas staged an illegal coup against the forces of President Mahmoud Abbas, the legitimate President of the Palestinian people. It was no surprise that Hamas rejected Egyptian and Arabian calls for an extension of the cease-fire Egypt had negotiated.

It was no surprise that when Israel voluntarily and unilaterally dismantled settlements and withdrew from Gaza in 2005 that Hamas saw this not as an opportunity to build peace but to instigate war, to continue to terrorize and kill Israelis in their places of worship, their schools, and their homes.

Since that year, Hamas terrorists have used Gaza to fire more than 6,300 mortars and rockets into Israel , reaching major cities, and pushing ever closer to the capital.

No country would be expected to sit on its hands and simply allow its citizens to endure these kinds of vicious attacks without taking action to stop the responsible party. If I am sitting in New Jersey, and rockets are landing around my house, near my children, and near our schools, my No. 1 goal, my immediate goal, is to stop the rockets. So in December of 2008, Israel sent its military to Gaza to achieve a direct goal: stop the rockets.

And now we all hope strongly that this goal can be achieved as quickly as possible. But we recognize it must be pursued if Israel is to have the sovereign right to protect itself and its citizens. Israel's acts to stop the Hamas rocket attacks are a response to the daily risk of death faced by the 900,000 Israeli citizens who live within rocket range. These innocent civilians have been forced to live constantly under the threat of mass casualties. No nation--no nation--should have to wait for the death toll to rise enough before it can act. No nation needs to wait until enough schoolchildren have fallen victim to a rocket attack before it stops rockets from falling on its cities. The launching of rockets and mortar fire is an invasion of Israel's sovereign territory. It is no different from dropping bombs out of airplanes. It is no different from any other act of war. There is no question that Israel has a right and an obligation to defend its people.

We mourn the loss of all innocent life, and the death of Palestinian civilians as a result of this conflict is tragic. There are a great many Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank who completely reject the Hamas ideology. They want to live in peace and build the Palestinian state for themselves and for their children. They are, however, Hamas hostages. Hamas has hijacked Gaza, not to build a state in which you can live in peace and prosperity but to use it as a base to launch attacks against innocent civilians in Israel .

Let us remember it was Hamas that chose to end the cease-fire, Hamas that chose to fire a continuous barrage of rockets. To date, it is Hamas that deliberately uses civilians as human shields and launches its attacks from heavily populated civilian areas, putting them at risk. It is Hamas that has spent its money on rockets rather than on food for the hungry. It is Hamas that would rather focus on the rhetoric that calls for the destruction of the State of Israel than on relief for its own people.

Israel and the United States have proven their commitment to helping innocent civilians in Gaza. In stark contrast to the terrorist group of Hamas, Israel has taken significant steps to prevent civilian casualties. They give warnings of impending attacks, they drop leaflets, and make phone calls to targeted areas to warn the citizens they are in danger, even if that means losing the element of surprise and putting the lives of their own soldiers at risk.

Israel and the United States have actively provided humanitarian assistance to Gaza. Since December 26, 10,000 tons of humanitarian aid have been delivered to Gaza in coordination with Israel, the Palestinian Authority, international organizations, and various other donors.

The United States Government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development, is continuing to deliver humanitarian supplies to the people of Gaza. The United States has provided medical and food supplies to health care facilities. We support the UN, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and other nongovernmental organizations as they continue their relief efforts.

We all want peace in Gaza and hope it can come very soon. But peace cannot be achieved so long as Hamas continues its missile attacks. If a just and lasting cease-fire is to occur, it is incumbent upon Hamas to immediately and permanently halt all attacks against the Israeli people.

I rise today to express unwavering commitment to the welfare, security, and survival of the state of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. That is what the resolution before us affirms. As the resolution states, the ultimate goal of the United States is a "sustainable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, that will allow for a viable and independent Palestinian state, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel." This will not be possible as long as Israeli civilians are under threat from rockets. As this resolution correctly lays out, Hamas must end the rocket and mortar attacks against Israel, recognize Israel's right to exist, renounce violence, and agree to accept previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians.

Today, the Senate must stand in support of the state of Israel, stand in support of its right to defend itself against terrorists, stand in support of its right to exist. Having said all of this, of course, we urge Israel as it defends its sovereignty and its people to use every option it can to limit the loss of innocent lives. So let us vote for a resolution that demonstrates our commitment to one of the strongest allies the United States of America has in the world, and let us do all we can to make it a peaceful 2009." (*Congressional Record*, January 8, 2009)

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, released the following statement in support of Israel’s right to self defense:

“For months – even before it officially violated the so-called cease-fire – the terrorist organization Hamas has been relentlessly firing missiles into Israel from Gaza, spreading terror, inflicting damage, and killing innocent civilians. No country would be expected to sit on its hands and simply allow its citizens to endure these kinds of vicious attacks without retaliating against the responsible party. I strongly support Israel’s right to self-defense and its decision to go after Hamas in response to the unyielding and increasingly far-reaching missile attacks. We all want peace in Gaza and hope that it will come very soon, but peace cannot be achieved so long as Hamas continues missile attacks. If a just and lasting cease-fire is to occur, it is incumbent upon Hamas to immediately and permanently halt all attacks against the Israeli people. As for the humanitarian situation in Gaza, I believe the United States and other countries can and should play a role in helping civilians in Gaza meet their basic needs through international assistance – without interference from Hamas – and I believe Israel has taken the right action with temporarily halts in military operations and creation of a humanitarian corridor to allow civilian aid into Gaza.” (*Press Release, January 8, 2009*)

Rep. John Mica (R-FL)

“Madam Speaker, I strongly support Israel's right to defend itself against the Hamas terrorist attacks. Until Israeli citizens can live without fear of these attacks, Israel is justified in its effort to maintain national security for its citizens.

While we all hope for peace in this region, it must not come at the expense of Israel's sovereignty or right to exist. The Gaza Strip, from which Israel unilaterally withdrew in 2005, poses a growing security threat to Israeli civilians. Over 10,000 rocket and mortar shells have been fired from Gaza since 2001, and this indiscriminate bombardment has escalated since Hamas seized power in their violent coup in 2007. About 860,000 Israeli civilians, or more than 12 percent of Israel's population, live in daily fear of a Hamas rocket attack.

Hamas ended the 6-month cease fire on December 19th by increasing its random rocket bombardment of Israeli civilians. Israel was compelled to take on the responsibility of defending its citizens against these terror tactics. In response to being attacked, it launched a defensive air attack against Hamas' terrorist rocket launchers and their terrorist infrastructure. Israel responded with a ground assault to minimize collateral losses in the civilian neighborhoods the Hamas terrorists hide in to launch these rockets.

Critics of Israel demand it sit down with Hamas to negotiate a lasting peace. I ask them all, how do you find a diplomatic solution with an enemy that will not recognize your right to exist? What terms can you offer that will bring peace with such an enemy other than outright capitulation?

Madam Speaker, let us stand together as an institution to show our Nation's support for Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza and pledge our continued commitment to Israel's right to defend itself as a free, independent and sovereign state.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Congressman John L. Mica (R-FL) today made the following statement in response to Israel's actions in Gaza.

“I strongly support Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas terrorist attacks, and until Israeli citizens can live without fear of these attacks, Israel is justified in its effort to maintain national security for its citizens.

While we all hope for peace in this region, it must not come at the expense of Israeli's sovereignty or right to exist.” (*Press Release, January 7, 2009*)

Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD)

“Rocket and mortar attacks on Israel from Hamas-controlled Gaza must stop. Hamas' failure to end this aggression is destroying lives, destroying hope and destroying the opportunity for peace in the region. Like all nations, Israel has a right to self-defense and to restore security to its citizens. Ending rocket attacks on Israel and recognizing Israel's right to exist are first steps Hamas must take to build peace in the region.” (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL)

“Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Israel's right to defend itself and to express my desire for a peaceful and lasting resolution to the current conflict.

In September of 2005, the Israeli government completed an evacuation of all Israeli citizens from Gaza. This historic evacuation, ordered by then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, was not widely popular throughout Israel but Mr. Sharon felt it was an important and necessary step in the quest for a 2-state solution. Soon after the evacuation, in January 2006, Hamas won 2/3 of the parliamentary elections in Gaza and took over as the democratically-elected government of the Palestinian people.

Since their election, Hamas has ignored the conciliatory actions of Israel and they have seen their popularity plummet because of this and their steadfast refusal to recognize the existence of Israel. So much was expected of the new Palestinian leadership following the death of Yassir Arafat but the leadership of Hamas has failed its people, and continues to be corrupt. This failed leadership came to a head on December 19th when Hamas ended the six-month cease fire with Israel and fired over 50 rockets into Israel.

After continued rocket attacks into heavily populated areas, Israel had no choice but to retaliate with force against Hamas and protect Israeli citizens. Hamas leadership knew Israel would respond, but still may have been surprised by the forcefulness with which the Israelis defended their citizens. Once the Israelis made clear they would not tolerate the rocket attacks, Hamas leaders followed a time-honored terrorist tradition of hiding amongst and under the people they should have been leading and protecting.

Following Israel's continued defense of its homeland, some have demanded Israel stop its targeted strikes into Gaza. This would only allow Hamas foot soldiers to continue resupplying their terrorist network and would offer little assurance that Hamas will refrain from targeting Israeli civilians. It is regrettable that Hamas continues firing rockets into Israel and as recently as Wednesday, rockets were fired into Israel from Lebanon.

I will continue to support the right of Israel to defend itself and encourage the people of Gaza to demand that their elected leaders cease the unjustified rocket attacks and the conscious choice to act as terrorists. Furthermore, I commend Egypt on its continuing role as an evenhanded facilitator of peace negotiations and urge other Middle Eastern nations to follow suit.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Harry Mitchell (D-AZ)

“Madam Speaker, I rise today to address an issue that is very much on the minds of my constituents right now – the violence in Israel and Gaza.

This is a difficult time for Israel, and as its ally, I believe we must support its right to self defense.

Before I joined Congress, I had the privilege of visiting Israel. It was a trip that I will never forget. I have always considered myself a friend of Israel, but that trip made me realize just how much our two nations have in common.

We all want peace, Madam Speaker, but clearly there can be no peace while Hamas continues to launch unprovoked rocket attacks into Israel.

We would not let Hamas launch rockets into the United States, and I do not know how we could expect Israel to hold itself to a lower standard.

I am deeply saddened by the casualties the recent conflict has inflicted, especially the civilian casualties. Each one of these is a tragedy, and I sincerely hope that both sides will do everything possible to avoid them.

I am encouraged by Israel’s decision to temporarily pause its military operations to allow delivery of humanitarian aid, and by Hamas’s decision to cease rocket launches during these deliveries. While only three hours, this is an important step forward. I hope that a longer lasting peace can be achieved soon.” (*Congressional Record, January 8, 2009*)

Rep. Dennis Moore (D-KS)

“Madam Speaker, I rise in support of Israel's right to defend its citizens and H. Res. 34. Confronted with repeated, indiscriminate attacks on its citizens, Israel is engaged in an effort to ensure its people can live in peace and without fear of rocket and mortar attacks. As one of our strongest allies, it is critical Israel knows it has the support and backing of the United States in this effort. I support Israel's right to defend itself and encourage my colleagues to join me in sending a strong message of support to Israel by voting for this legislation.

In addition to expressing vigorous support for the welfare, security and survival of Israel, the resolution also encourages the Administration to work actively to support a durable and sustainable cease-fire in Gaza that prevents Hamas from retaining or rebuilding its terrorist infrastructure. It is my hope that both groups will implement a swift end to this conflict that ensures future peace and stop unnecessary civilian casualties.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Jerry Moran (R-KS)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Jerry Moran made the following statement today in regard to Israel’s recent military action against Hamas attacks in Gaza on Israeli civilians.

“Israel is right to defend its citizens against current rocket and mortar attacks launched by Hamas terrorists,” Moran said. “Israel has been, and continues to be one of America’s strongest allies in the Middle East and U.S. leaders repeatedly have encouraged peace efforts between Israel leaders and the Palestinian government. This renewed violence sparked by Hamas terrorists warrants a strong Israeli response. I hope both groups will implement a swift ceasefire to put an end to this conflict and stop unnecessary civilian casualties.” (*Press Release, January 5, 2009*)

Rep. Patrick Murphy (D-PA)

“Having been to the town of Sderot in Israel and visited with families there, I can say with certainty that nobody should have to tolerate these persistent and indiscriminate rocket attacks. While continued violence will not lead to peace, Israel has the right to defend herself -- especially against terrorist groups that fire rockets at civilians on a weekly basis.” (*Press Release, December 29, 2008*)

Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY)

“Hamas has left Israel with no choice in this situation, faced with incessant barrages of rocket fire by Hamas into Israeli cities like Ashdod, Ashkelon and Sderot, Israel must defend her citizens against these deadly attacks. We would expect nothing less from any other government. And, unfortunately, by hiding its military operations behind the cover of civilian life, Hamas has needlessly imperiled innocent Palestinian civilians in Gaza.” (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA)

(SPRINGFIELD, MASS) Congressman Richard E. Neal released the following statement today regarding the crisis in the Gaza Strip:

"I join President Bush, President-elect Obama and the bi-partisan leadership of the United States Congress in support of Israel's right to defend itself against the rocket and mortar

attacks by the terrorist group Hamas. In the past six weeks, more than 600 rockets and mortars have been fired from the Gaza Strip at innocent Israeli civilians. Nearly 500,000 Israelis are within range of Hamas' deadly arsenal. The State of Israel is a sovereign nation that has a right to defend itself. And there is no doubt that the United States and its allies hold Hamas responsible for the current crisis in the region.

For many years, I have been an outspoken supporter of the efforts to bring peace and security to the Middle East. A negotiated settlement between the Israelis and Palestinians is the only way to resolve the conflict between the two parties. I welcome the call for an immediate ceasefire and support humanitarian assistance for Palestinians in Gaza. But the attacks and aggression on innocent Israelis by Hamas have to stop immediately." (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL)

"I strongly support Israel's sovereign right to defend itself and its citizens against terrorism," said U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson. "For years, Hamas has terrorized the citizens of Israel through deadly rocket and mortar attacks from its sanctuary in Gaza. Hamas must be held squarely responsible for breaking the ceasefire and for causing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza." (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Gov. Martin O'Malley (D-MD)

ANNAPOLIS, MD (December 30, 2008) – Governor Martin O'Malley today released the following statement regarding the situation in Gaza:

"Israel, like every nation, has the right to defend herself and her people from attack. Since Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, Hamas has launched thousands of rocket and mortar attacks indiscriminately against civilian targets in Israel."

"Just as Hamas chose to provoke a military response from Israel with endless rocket attacks, Hamas also has the choice to reject terror and violence with an immediate ceasefire, recognize Israel's right to exist, and accept the existing agreements between Israel and the Palestinians as they work toward a just and lasting peace."

"In this current conflict, the United States stands with its democratic ally Israel in her desire for a lasting peace in the Middle East with secure borders." (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

President Barack Obama

Asked about Israel's operation in Gaza during an interview on ABC's [This Week with George Stephanopoulos](#), President-elect Obama said, "I think that's a basic principle of any country is that they've got to protect their citizens," reiterating comments he made during a visit to Israel last year. (*Jerusalem Post, January 11, 2009*)

Rep. Pete Olson (R-TX)

“On December 27, 2008, Israel began its Operation Cast Lead against known Hamas terrorist facilities throughout the Gaza Strip, including Hamas terrorist training camps, rocket factories and storage facilities, rocket launch sites, symbols of Hamas dominance, Hamas recruitment and propaganda facilities, Hamas headquarters and other military and strategic sites. Hamas itself bears the blame for these strikes, which are in response to Hamas’ breaking of a cease fire by attacking Israeli civilians with hundreds of rockets launched from the Gaza Strip. As Israel tried all diplomatic means to reinstate the cease fire, Hamas intensified its attacks. A government’s primary responsibility is to protect its citizens from harm, and that is what Israel is doing. Americans support Israel as it acts to protect its civilians from terrorist attacks – just as we would expect our government to protect its citizens if terrorists were attacking Sugar Land, Pearland, Pasadena or Clear Lake with rockets launched from southern Houston. No people should live in a constant fear of rocket attacks, and no children should spend their days and nights in bomb shelters hiding from those rockets. The people of the 22nd congressional district would not stand for that situation, and neither should the people of southern Israel. America stands with Israel and other freedom-loving countries against terrorist groups like Hamas and their supporters, who seek to destroy our democratic way of life.” (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Rep. John Olver (D-MA)

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman John W. Olver (D, MA-1) released the following statement today regarding the situation in Gaza:

“With grave concern I have been following the latest developments in the Gaza Strip. The people of Israel have a right to be safe in their homes and daily lives.

I strongly support Israel’s right to defend itself as well as the right of Palestinians to realize a viable and sustainable state.

I call upon the United States, the United Nations Security Council, and the broader international community to secure an immediate and lengthy cease-fire and encourage both sides to begin serious negotiations to avoid repetition of this latest round of violence.

Right now, immediate humanitarian assistance—especially food and medical supplies—is needed for Palestinian civilians in Gaza. In the future, the United States must lead the effort towards achieving a permanent and sustainable peace agreement; only then will Israelis and Palestinians be able to live in peace and security.” (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Gov. David Paterson (D-NY)

STATEMENT FROM GOVERNOR DAVID A. PATERSON

“As Americans, we are blessed to live in a democracy which embraces different religions, cultures and ethnicities. More than seven years ago, New Yorkers’ faith in that democracy

was tested when we suffered our own tragedy at the hands of terrorists. But we did not let that dark day in our history diminish our resolve to fight for our freedom. We continue to stand in solidarity with those who defend themselves in the pursuit of peace.

“Over the past few days, I have closely monitored the current escalation of violence in Israel and Gaza. I hope and pray for a peaceful solution for both sides and I strongly condemn Hamas for breaking the current ceasefire. I believe the Israeli people, under constant attack from the Palestinian territories, have a right to protect themselves and I stand with them as they fight to defend the basic rights of humanity.

“I traveled to Israel in 2007 and I discovered firsthand what I had always known to be true – Israel is an extraordinary democracy blessed with very courageous citizens who refuse to live their lives in fear. New Yorkers have experienced the horror of terrorism; we must not and will not let senseless acts of terror undermine our commitment and resolve to fight for democratic principles both at home and around the world.” (*December 30, 2008*)

Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)

“Mr. Speaker, the resolution before the House underscores the more than 60-year commitment of the United States to the security of Israel.

“I proudly sponsor this resolution and I thank the other original co-sponsors of this legislation, including House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Howard Berman, Ranking Member Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and Republican Leader John Boehner, as well as the many Members who have voiced their support for this measure and for the State of Israel.

“Today, we reaffirm that Israel, like any nation, has a right to self-defense when under attack. The rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza, which were increasing in frequency and range, constituted an unacceptable security threat to which Israel had a responsibility to respond.

“All of us regret the loss of life, injury, and destruction of property of innocent civilians that has occurred on both sides of the conflict. When I spoke with Prime Minister Olmert last week, I made clear our concerns about the loss of life among civilians. We must do all we can to relieve the pain of the innocents and to bring about a real peace that will avoid further loss of life on both sides.

“If we are to achieve a real peace, we must begin with a ceasefire to the current conflict, which is why this resolution calls for the Bush Administration to work toward that end. But a ceasefire must do more than just end the current fighting – it must address some of the root causes of the conflict so we may attain a peace that is, in the words of this resolution, ‘durable and sustainable.’

“Security for Israel and an improvement in the lives of the people of Gaza cannot be achieved as long as Hamas uses that impoverished land as a launching pad for attacks against Israelis.

“The goal of any ceasefire must be more than a return to the status quo; it must be a positive and measurable step toward a final, just resolution of the differences between Palestinians and

Israelis. Our goal must be to achieve an agreement between Palestinians and Israelis that results in a secure Israel living side-by-side with a viable and independent Palestinian state—and with both finding peace and prosperity.

“The cycle of violence that feeds the fury of despair must be broken; the hard work of negotiation must be done; and the difficult but necessary decisions made so that such an agreement can be achieved.

“The United States must be an active, constant, and engaged partner in this effort. With the new energy and fresh thinking of the new Administration, we pray that an enduring settlement can be reached.

“From the moment in 1947 that President Harry Truman took the bold step of recognizing the state of Israel to this very day, America has stood and will continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our democratic ally in the Middle East.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Washington, D.C. -- Speaker Nancy Pelosi issued the following statement today on the situation in Gaza:

"Peace between Israelis and Palestinians cannot result from daily barrages of rocket and mortar fire from Hamas-controlled Gaza. Hamas and its supporters must understand that Gaza cannot and will not be allowed to be a sanctuary for attacks on Israel.

"The United States must continue to do all it can to promote peace in the region and a negotiated settlement to differences between Israelis and Palestinians. Humanitarian needs of all innocent civilians must also be addressed. But when Israel is attacked, the United States must continue to stand strongly with its friend and democratic ally." (*Press Release, December 27, 2008*)

Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN)

“For millennia, Israel was a dream. In 1948 it became a reality. But in recent days the periphery of Gaza has become a nightmare for Israeli men, women and children. I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 34, a bipartisan measure which recognizes Israel’s right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza and reaffirms the United States’ strong support for our partner. And time is of the essence.

“This very morning, Hamas continues to fire rockets into Israel despite the United Nations ceasefire resolution passed last night. Israel has a right and a duty to defend her people against the attacks of a terrorist group that victimizes the people of Gaza and Israelis on her border. In the face of these evil acts no nation could tolerate, I commend Israel for working to minimize civilian casualties.

“In these dire circumstances, we must stand with Israel as she defends herself, we must show the resolve of our relationship as peaceful democracies, and we must show the resolve of a

relationship born of the intimate and deepest held values of both of our people, for the history of Israel is a history of struggle.

“Over sixty years ago, the state of Israel, under the leadership of a small band of courageous Zionists, declared independence in its ancient homeland. It was promptly recognized by the United States, and it was promptly attacked by its Arab neighbors.

“The more things change, the more they seem to stay the same.

“Israel prevailed against the long odds then, again in 1967, again in 1973, and countless other times and Israel will prevail again today. But she will not do so alone.

“We and all the freedom-loving nations of the world must stand with Israel and condemn the violence that’s been perpetrated against her people. We cannot stand idly by while a gathering menace grows in the region, and a menace perpetrates such acts of evil against our cherished allies.

“We must come together to rededicate ourselves to the preservation and the protection of Israel as a Jewish state and to Jerusalem as her eternal capital.

“I commend all of my colleagues for bringing this timely resolution to the floor.”
(*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Ed Perlmutter (D-CO)

Washington DC - U.S. Rep. Ed Perlmutter (CO-07) issued the following statement about the situation in Gaza:

“I am disappointed that Hamas unilaterally chose to end the cease fire with Israel, and that they recommenced firing rockets and mortars at Israeli population centers. Since handing control of Gaza to the Palestinian Authority in 2005, Israel has been the victim of over 2000 rocket attacks from Hamas and other terrorist groups. Israel has the right and obligation to defend its citizens against these attacks. Hamas has the ability to end the crisis by ceasing further rocket attacks. For the sake of the Palestinian and Israeli people, I call on Hamas to end their attacks and encourage both parties to pursue peace,” stated Perlmutter. (*Press Release, January 5, 2009*)

Gov. Rick Perry (R-TX)

Gov. Rick Perry today issued the following statement on the ongoing conflict in Gaza:

“Hamas must cease its attacks on Israel. No other nation on earth would be expected to stand idly by while a neighbor fired missiles and mortars into its cities, but Israel is being held to an unreasonable, irresponsible standard of restraint. Instead, the world community should be united in its support of Israel’s right to defend its citizens and clear in its condemnation of Hamas.

“While I am saddened by the loss of life on both sides, a suitable resolution to the conflict is possible if Israel's neighbors will acknowledge Israel's sovereign right to defend its people. That acknowledgement would be an essential first step toward a lasting peace.

“The world community must not tolerate terrorism in any form, regardless of any false nobility assigned to its perpetrators or their motives.” (*Press Release, January 2, 2009*)

Rep. Gary Peters (D-MI)

“Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 34 , the Gaza Conflict Resolution.

Israel has been under attack, and like any sovereign nation it has the right to defend itself. I steadfastly support Israel as it continues to undertake operations to ensure the security of its citizens. Israel is America's friend and ally and I support its pursuit of security and its objective of self defense in the face of continued attacks on its existence. Hamas is a terrorist organization and its actions undermine the hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people.

The U.S. must do everything it can to help reach a resolution that begins with an immediate end to Hamas rocket fire on Israel and includes efforts to provide for the humanitarian needs of all civilians. The U.S. should continue to be thoroughly involved in the region in order to ensure Israel's security and help achieve sustained peace.

In support of these goals, I urge passage of this resolution.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

“Israel has been under attack, and like any sovereign nation it has the right to defend itself. Israel is America’s friend and ally and I support its pursuit of security and acts of self defense in the face of continued attacks on the existence of the Jewish state. Israel’s current objective in Gaza is to provide security for its citizens, and that is a goal that must be achieved.

“In 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew its soldiers and settlements from the Gaza Strip in a move designed to set the stage for a future peace agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians. Unfortunately, since Israel's withdrawal, Hamas has used Gaza as a launching pad, firing over 6,000 rockets into southern Israel.

“Hamas is a terrorist organization dedicated to the destruction of the state of Israel. The U.S. should do everything it can to help reach a resolution that begins with an immediate end to Hamas rocket fire and provides for Israel’s continued security.” (*Public Statement, January 8, 2009*)

Rep. Todd Platts (R-PA)

“The United States and the international community must stand united with Israel against the threat of terrorism. Since Israel voluntarily withdrew from Gaza in September 2005, Gaza-

based terrorists have launched more than 6,000 rockets into Israel. Israel has every right to defend its citizens from these ongoing attacks.

I first visited Israel with five other members of Congress in 2003 and was struck by the degree to which ordinary Israelis were under the constant threat of terrorist attacks. Homes had bulletproof windows, security guards and metal detectors were necessities in most public places, and the threat of suicide bombings was a daily reality.” (*Congressional Record*, January 9, 2009)

Rep. Ted Poe (R-TX)

“Mr. Speaker, as the fighting in the Middle East rages on, many in the media and the elites in Europe have asserted with self-righteous indignation that Israel's response to Hamas' acts of terror is not appropriate, and Israel should unilaterally cease all military operations. They cite inflated numbers of Palestinian civilians killed in this war and blame Israel for the death; never mind the fact that the coward of the desert, Hamas, uses Palestinian men, women and children at mosques, schools and hospitals as shields; never mind the fact that before bombing a military target in Gaza, Israel calls the area and advises the civilians to leave; and never mind the fact that since 2000 more than 8,000 rockets have been fired by Hamas into Israel civilian settlements. Mr. Speaker, Israel must defend its people from these attacks.

The truth is, Mr. Speaker, that the moral differences between Hamas and Israel could not be clearer. Hamas worships death, Israel worships life. Hamas supports terrorism, Israel supports liberty. Hamas oppresses women, Israel honors women. Hamas destroys, Israel builds. Hamas believes in the pursuit of misery and Israel believes in the pursuit of happiness. Hamas supports crucifixion, Israel supports mercy. Hamas honors murder, Israel honors the sanctity of life. Hamas kills people with different religious beliefs, Israel embraces the freedom of religion. Hamas incites hatred, Israel believes in tolerance. Hamas is racist, Israel believes in the equality of all. Hamas believes in chaos, Israel believes in justice. Hamas promotes anarchy, and Israel promotes peace. The moral canyon that separates Israel from Hamas is best described by Hamas' own motto, and I quote, “We love death more than the Jews love life.”

Hamas not only doesn't care about killing Jews, it doesn't care about killing Palestinians either. They use living Palestinians as human shields. Hamas prevents humanitarian aid from Israel from reaching Palestinians in Gaza.

The international community has begun calling for an immediate cease-fire, especially the Europeans, asking and telling Israel they must unilaterally stop this war. Mr. Speaker, some in Europe don't believe that anything is worth fighting for, but some things are worth fighting for. The basic human right of liberty is worth fighting for whether Europeans believe in it or not.

The last thing Israel ought to agree to is another phony peace. Israel did that 3 years ago with Lebanon and look what happened; the U.N.-mandated disarmament of Hezbollah failed miserably. Hezbollah has rearmed, and in fact just last week began firing more rockets on Israel .

There can be no peace in this war as long as Hamas is allowed to murder in the name of religion. Rather than bending to the pressure of world opinion, Israel ought to continue to protect her right to exist and the rights of her people to live free. The world must demand that Hamas cease all rocket fire and smuggling of arms from Egypt into Gaza.

Hamas needs to leave Israel alone. Just today, Osama bin Laden issued a 20-minute recording calling for a jihad against Israel . Jihad is another phrase for a holy war against Israel for its actions in Gaza. All the eyes of the world, especially the moderate Arab states, are looking to this conflict to see whether Iran and its hired guns, Hamas and Hezbollah, are victorious.

Hezbollah and Hamas, these twin tribes of terror, must be stopped. Unless they are, Iran will be encouraged to be more aggressive in the region and assert its influence over moderate Arab states. You see, Iran and the little fellow Ahmadinejad are the real threats to peace in the desert sands of the Middle East.

This is not the time to be rattled by the terrorist threats. This is the time to stand with the only democracy in the Middle East for the right of her self-defense, Israel . It's the right thing to do. Israel's war of self-defense is morally just. And Mr. Speaker, justice is the one thing we should always find.

And that's just the way it is.” (*Congressional Record, January 14, 2009*)

“Madam Speaker, Israel and Hamas are at war. But make no mistake about it, it's the little fellow from Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and his radical religious cronies of hate that are the ones that are behind this troubling turmoil in the lands of the Middle East.

For years Iran has supported the twin tribes of terror, Hamas and Hezbollah, by supplying arms and equipment and training. In 2006 Iran used the hired guns of Hezbollah in Lebanon to war with Israel.

Hamas has proudly proclaimed that it's had its soldiers of terror trained in Iran. Now Hamas is firing long-range Iranian missiles from Gaza into civilian areas of Israel . And the bandit group, Hezbollah, is getting blamed for new missile attacks into northern Israel.

As the nations of the world, especially Egypt, attempt to broker a cease-fire between Hamas and Israel , they would do well to deal with the real culprit in this war, Iran.

Until the world recognizes that President Ahmadinejad is determined to destroy Israel by any means necessary, there will never be peace in the Middle East. Iran has made its intentions clear to the world. World leaders need to make it clear to Iran that murder in the name of hate, will not be tolerated on the world stage.

And that's just the way it is.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

“Madam Speaker, Hamas is a rogue group of outlaws that hibernate in Palestinian civilian areas of Gaza and fire Iranian missiles into Israel. Israel has received hundreds of these missile attacks in the last few days, thousands in the last few years.

Israel has been patient, maybe overly patient. Make no mistake about it, Hamas is the aggressor. So Israel not only has the right but moral obligation to defend its people by fighting back.

You see, Hamas is one of the two twin tribes of terror that operate in the Middle East. The other being Hezbollah. These bandits operate in the Middle East with the sole purpose to kill Israelis. Hamas murders in the name of religious hatred for Jews and Israel. Israel defends itself while some world leaders criticize Israel for doing so. These world leaders, especially those in the United Nations, are out of touch with the way the world really is. The Middle East is in turmoil because of terror groups like Hamas, and they are the aggressor.

The recent aggression by Hamas is no doubt sponsored by the little fellow from Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. He is the real world threat to peace in the Middle East. He has openly stated that Israel must be completely destroyed. And eventually, world leaders must deal with this issue. But people cry "peace, peace--peace at any price", but there can be no peace as long as Hamas continues to murder Israelis.

Israel is our ally. The United States should stand by its allies. Israel is defending its people. It is obligated to do so, and I commend them for representing and defending their people.

And that's just the way it is." (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

"Madam Speaker, Israel and Hamas are fighting each other in the Gaza Strip. The question is, what is this fighting all about?"

For centuries, the Jews and Muslims have fought over a strip of land in what we call the Holy Land called the Gaza Strip. It's a territorial dispute, but it's also a conflict of a religious nature.

The Gaza Strip is a tiny sliver of land about two times the size of Washington, D.C., with a population of about 1.5 million people. It is bordered by the State of Israel on three sides and the Mediterranean Sea to the West.

The modern war between Israel and the Palestinians began after Israel became a sovereign nation in 1948, after the end of World War II. After the Egyptian invasion of Israel in May of 1948 and the subsequent occupation of the Gaza Strip, large groups of Palestinian refugees began to arrive and live in Gaza.

In the last half of the 20th century, territorial control bounced back and forth between Israel and its Muslim neighboring countries. In the 1990s, Israel transferred security and civilian responsibility for the Palestinian-populated areas of Gaza to the Palestinian Authority. After that transfer, Palestinians elected Yasser Arafat to be their leader, a person who was by no means pro-Israel, but a leader at the very least who worked for peace between Israel and Palestine.

In September 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew all of its settlers and soldiers and dismantled its military facilities in the Gaza Strip on the condition that the Palestinian terrorist groups, like Hamas, would stop terrorizing innocent civilians in Israel near the Gaza border, but that

did not happen. Hamas continued its relentless attacks against the Jews, causing an escalation of tension in that region.

Then in January of 2006, the people of Palestine elected Hamas to head the Palestine Legislative Council. The international community did not accept the Hamas-led government because it refused to renounce violence, refused to recognize the State of Israel, and refused to honor previous peace agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

After a series of infighting between Hamas and more moderate Palestinians, Hamas militants succeeded in a violent takeover of all the military and government institutions in the Gaza Strip.

So since 2000, Hamas terrorists have targeted over 1 million Israeli civilians in Gaza and Israel literally firing thousands of rockets, missiles and mortar shells into Israel. In just the past 10 days, Hamas has fired more than 500 rockets at innocent Israeli civilians, and there is no end in sight.

The anti-Semitic hate speech propagated by Hamas leaders is no figment of anyone's imagination. It is real. It's enticing an entire generation of young people to become terrorists, all in the name of religion. Even our State Department has designated Hamas as a foreign terrorist organization for as long as that list has existed.

But we don't have to take our own government's word for it. In 2005, a Hamas leader in Gaza told the media that, "Neither the liberation of the Gaza Strip nor the liberation of the West Bank or even Jerusalem will suffice us. Hamas will pursue the armed struggle until the liberation of all our lands. We don't recognize the State of Israel or its right to hold onto one inch of Palestine. Palestine is an Islamic land belonging to all the Muslims."

Later in 2006, another leader said, "Israel is not a legitimate entity, and no amount of pressure can force us to recognize its right to exist. Israel must be humiliated and degraded."

These are not the words of a people who desire peace and reconciliation. These are the words of a people who blatantly call for the complete destruction of Israel and will not stop at anything until that happens.

What's worse, Hamas doesn't care what it takes to make this happen, even if that means killing its own people.

Since the fighting began, Israel has allowed over 200 truckloads of food and medicine to enter Gaza, even under shellfire. Just today, Israel agreed to cease its ground operations for 3 hours every day so that humanitarian supplies can be taken into Gaza.

But meanwhile, Hamas is not only preventing its own wounded civilians from crossing into Egypt to receive medical treatment, but they're stealing medicine and supplies meant for civilians and using them for their wounded terrorists.

What makes Hamas even more inhumane is their willingness to put their own people in harm's way. Time and time again, Hamas has intentionally launched missiles into school

yards and residential areas, putting Palestinians at risk, daring Israel to try and come after them, even hoping for Palestinian civilian lives to be lost in these attacks.

It's time for the rest of the world to stand in solidarity with Israel in its fight against terrorism and demand that Hamas immediately end its rocket fire attacks on Israel and stop smuggling through tunnels between Egypt and Gaza. However, Hamas says it will never end their war against Israel until Israel ceases to exist.

In the face of such hate, Madam Speaker, Israel is left with no other choice but to defend its people and its sovereign territory from these murderous terrorists.

And that's just the way it is.” (*Congressional Record, January 7, 2009*)

“Madam Speaker, the radical hate group Hamas in Gaza has refused to renew a truce with Israel . It has begun once more firing thousands of Iranian-made rockets into Israel . Numerous Israelis have died in the last 11 days.

Hamas wants to annihilate Israel because, well, they're Jews. Hamas kills people that aren't radical Muslims like themselves. That's why they're called terrorists.

Hamas cowardly hides among civilians for cover, fires rockets, then is indignant if Israel defends itself. But Israel has moved into Gaza to find these bad guys.

Some world leaders, rather than mounting pressure on Hamas to stop the rocket attacks, are calling for a ceasefire, even a unilateral withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. In other words, peace at any price.

Peace ought to be a goal, but not at all costs. Actually, some things are worth fighting for. Now is not the time for unrealistic, hopeful idealism. Lives are on the line.

Men may cry peace, peace, but there can be no peace as long as Hamas kills in the name of religion.

And that's just the way it is.” (*Congressional Record, January 7, 2009*)

“Madam Speaker, it looks like the days of the Old West have returned and are being played out in the Middle East between Israel and Hamas.

Innocent Israeli civilians have been targeted by Hamas terrorists. These terrorist outlaws have fired over 8,000 rockets and mortar shells at Israel since 2000, and they still won't quit. These extremists call for the total destruction of the nation of Israel . They are shooting at Israeli civilians in southern Israel with the help of Iranian-made long-range rockets.

Self-defense is a basic human right, Madam Speaker. It is a principle that goes back to the Wild West: If you are getting shot at, you have the right to shoot back to defend yourself. And Israel is fighting back. Israel has the moral right and duty to protect its people from Hamas militants waging war against them.

Hamas is nothing more than a ragtag gang of terrorists intent on kidnapping, killing and terrorizing as many Israelis as possible. These attacks cannot go unanswered. The United States must stand with Israel.

Hamas doesn't want peace. They want a war of destruction against Israel. In the face of such hate, Israel is left with no other choice but to defend its people and its sovereign territory from these murderous outlaws.

And that's just the way it is.” (*Congressional Record, January 6, 2009*)

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Ted Poe (TX-02) expressed support for Israel’s response to attacks by Hamas terrorists in the Gaza Strip in a statement released today:

“Every country has the right of self defense and Israel is exercising its duty to protect its people. Our democratic allies were left with no choice but to defend their people and do what is necessary to eliminate Hamas militants waging war on their country. The US must stand with Israel and support their ongoing efforts to protect themselves from Islamist terrorist attacks. Their continued attacks cannot go unanswered and I urge other world powers to stand with Israel in its fight against terrorism.”

Congressman Poe serves on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and Terrorism Subcommittee. (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Rep. Bill Posey (R-FL)

“Madam Speaker, I rise in support of House Resolution 34 which recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the United States' strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

When Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, there was hope from many that this was an opportunity for peace. Sadly, this has not been the case. Since then more than 3 years have passed and approximately 6,400 rockets have been fired from Gaza into Israeli civilian communities by Hamas and other pro-Palestinian organizations. Their goal: to kill, maim, terrorize and traumatize innocent Israeli civilians.

My friends, this total disregard for human life must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. These terrorist groups, some of which we know are supported by Iran and Syria, have left the Israeli Government no choice but to defend the lives of their citizens.

And to make matters worse, Hamas has been using its own people--families and children--as human shields when launching their sinister rocket attacks. Hamas terrorists have chosen to launch missiles into Israel from civilian sites intentionally placing the lives of Palestinians at risk. This shows their total disregard not only for the lives of Israelis, but for the lives of Palestinians as well.

The world must come together and condemn the use of these outrageous and cowardly tactics against civilian communities and recognize Israel's right as a sovereign and democratic nation to protect its citizens and borders from unprovoked terrorism. I urge my colleagues to stand up and support H. Res. 34 and recognize Israel's right to do whatever it takes to protect the lives of its citizens.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Tom Price (R-GA)

“The restraint exercised by Israel prior to the current conflict was commendable and remarkable. We all appreciate that the defense of sovereignty ultimately dictated action. Hamas must not be allowed to perpetuate a violent, open-ended threat to the Israeli people. Like all those who stand for peace and democracy, I urge the leadership of all nations to work for a responsible resolution. Especially during this time of transition in our nation, we must ensure the United States does not waiver in its support for Israel or democracy.” (*Letter to AIPAC, January 7, 2009*)

Rep. Adam Putnam (R-FL)

“Madam Speaker, no one can view the reports of innocent lives lost on both sides of the Israeli border without a sense of mourning and a strong desire to see the violence stop. Some criticize the degree to which Israel has responded to the most recent rocket attacks, but it is inconceivable that any nation would tolerate rockets or missiles being fired at it by another nation.

Nations not only have the right to self-defense, but an obligation to protect their citizens. Recognizing this fundamental right, the Israeli government responded to the Hamas rocket fire in the only manner available to them--by attacking the buildings that house Hamas leaders and the sites where it is believed weapons have been stockpiled.

Unfortunately, in addition to killing militants, civilians have also died as a result of Hamas' exploitation of hospitals, schools, and mosques to store weaponry and conceal terrorist activities. The loss of civilian lives during any military engagement is tragic, but it should not go unnoticed that Hamas selfishly relishes in martyrdom at the expense of the innocent Palestinians.

The actions of Hamas are unacceptable and must come to a stop immediately. Hamas initiated the attacks and now cynically cries foul when Israel responds. Those who blame Israel are playing into the hands of the extremists who are opposed to substantive peace.

I wholeheartedly believe that we must find a solution that brings peace to the region. Bear in mind that reaching an agreement in the Middle East has been a goal among peace-loving nations since the founding of Israel.

The key point in the conflict, nonetheless, has been the refusal of a number of governments and militant organizations, including Hamas, to accept the fundamental premise that Israel has the right to exist. Without agreement on this point, peace will be impossible to achieve.

The onus is on Hamas to suspend its attacks on Israel and to call for a renewed cease-fire. Perhaps, then serious negotiations can resume with the goal of bringing peaceful coexistence in the Middle East. As one of our closest allies, we should continue to support Israel in their quest for peace and endeavor to stop terrorism in the region.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

BARTOW, Fla. – Following demonstrations against Israel in two Florida cities yesterday, Congressman Adam Putnam (R-Fla.) issued the following statement in support of the Jewish state:

“Israel not only has the right to defend itself, but the responsibility to its citizens to protect them from the rocket attacks that Hamas has initiated. The loss of civilian lives in recent days is very tragic, but we must also be clear: It is the actions of Hamas that are unacceptable and must come to a stop immediately. Hamas initiated the attacks and now cynically cries foul when Israel responds in the only way it had available. Those who would blame Israel are playing into the hands of the extremists who are opposed to peace.”

According to news accounts, demonstrations against Israel’s actions occurred in Tampa and Ft. Lauderdale yesterday.

Since 2001, Putnam has represented Florida’s 12th Congressional District, which includes most of Polk County and portions of Hillsborough and Osceola counties. (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Rep. George Radanovich (R-CA)

Washington DC – Congressman George Radanovich (R-Mariposa) today released the following statement regarding the current situation in Gaza:

“The recent escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip is sad and discouraging. Unfortunately, Hamas has proven their unwillingness to allow our friends in Israel to live in peace, which has given Israeli forces no choice but to defend their sovereignty.

“An immediate end to the violence in the Gaza region is desired by all; however it is imperative that Israel has the freedom to defend their people and their democracy from blatant terrorist actions.

“The Palestinian people deserve better than the destructive leadership provided by Hamas and I encourage the international community to help facilitate a resolution to the current conflict and ultimately, peace in the region.” (*Press Release, January 5, 2009*)

Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY)

“Israel, like any other sovereign nation, has the right to provide for her own security against terrorist campaigns. A cease fire does not seem plausible until the rocket attacks by Hamas and the threat for future rocket attacks have ended. Of course, it is in everyone's best interest

to end the constant threat of violence. We must do more to build an environment where we can grow new economic opportunities for both sides which will provide Palestinians with a sense of economic hope and allow Israelis to live in peace. I am confident and hopeful that President-elect Barack Obama will be able to bring together the peace loving people of the world in order to create economic and political stability for the Palestinian people and a two state solution without having to fear the terrorism instituted by Hamas.” (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI)

“Like you, I am deeply concerned about the escalating violence and its toll on innocent civilians in the region.

I stand by Israel’s right to defend its citizens against rocket and mortar attacks by Hamas from Gaza, which have killed and injured many Israelis over the last several years. I also believe that Israel, like all states, has an obligation to restore security for its residents.

We need a cease fire that is durable and sustainable. I hope such an agreement can be reached quickly.

I believe that the United States needs to be energetically engaged in bringing the parties together to form a long-lasting agreement between Israel and the Palestinians and that the United States has an obligation to support the emergence of a peaceful, democratic Palestinian leadership.

I continue to support the implementation of a two-state solution, in which Israelis and Palestinians agree to live as neighbors in peace and security. I remain hopeful that under the incoming Administration, the United States will encourage the parties to accomplish this necessary goal.” (*Constituent Letter, January 4, 2009*)

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV)

“I rise to voice my strong support of a resolution in support of Israel that I have introduced with Leader McConnell, along with an overwhelming number of bipartisan cosponsors. When we pass this resolution, the United States Senate will strengthen our historic bond with the State of Israel by reaffirming Israel’s inalienable right to defend against attacks from Gaza, as well as our support for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

“I spoke with Prime Minister Olmert last week and again expressed my understanding of and appreciation for the terrible situation that Israel has faced. Hamas has been firing rockets and mortars into Israel, killing and maiming innocent Israeli civilians, for more than eight years.

“I ask my colleagues to imagine if this were happening here in the United States and rocket fire was coming from Vancouver, Canada, into Seattle. Would the United States react? Of course we would. We would have to react to protect our people, and it would be not only our right but our obligation to do so. That is what the Israelis have done.

“ Hamas must stop the rocket fire from Gaza into Israel. That is the stated objective of the Israelis.

“ I acknowledge and appreciate the calls by some for a cease-fire. Certainly we must encourage a peaceful resolution of the conflict. But we must be certain that any cease-fire is sustainable, durable, and enforceable.

“ Our resolution reflects these sentiments. It states that:

- The United States Senate stands with Israel at this critical moment and recognizes Israel’s right to self-defense;
- Hamas must end the rocket and mortar attacks against Israel;
- Any cease-fire must be durable, enforceable and sustainable;
- The lives of innocent civilians should be protected; and
- We support a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a strong and secure Israeli living in peace with an independent Palestinian state.

“ I encourage all of my colleagues to support this critical expression of support for our steadfast ally, the State of Israel.” (*Congressional Record, January 8, 2009*)

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid made the following statement today:

“ I continue to closely monitor events in Gaza. I strongly support Israel’s right to defend its citizens against rocket and mortar attacks from Hamas-controlled Gaza, which have killed and injured Israeli citizens, and to restore security to its residents. Hamas’ failure to stop these attacks only exacerbates the humanitarian situation for the residents of Gaza and undermines efforts to attain peace and security in the region.” (*Press Release, December 29, 2008*)

Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

“ The United States strongly condemns the repeated rocket and mortar attacks against Israel and holds Hamas responsible for breaking the ceasefire and for the renewal of violence in Gaza. The ceasefire should be restored immediately. The United States calls on all concerned to address the urgent humanitarian needs of the innocent people of Gaza.” (*December 27, 2008*)

Sen. Pat Roberts (R-KS)

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Senator Pat Roberts today issues the following statement:

“The issue is Israel’s right to self-defense,” Roberts said. “The people of Gaza have only the terrorist organization Hamas to blame for the current hostilities and only Hamas can end this conflict by stopping the daily barrage of rocket fire into Israel.

“Any ceasefire must be based on conditions that allow Israelis to live without the fear of daily attacks. That message should be clear both to Hamas and their sponsor, Iran.” (*Press Release, January 6, 2009*)

Rep. Mike Rogers (R-AL)

(WASHINGTON, DC)— Congressman Mike Rogers introduced a resolution today which supports Israel’s right to self-defense and condemns the terrorist group Hamas and their continuous attacks from Gaza on Israel for placing innocent people in both Israel and Gaza in danger. H. Res. 37 was introduced with Representative Trent Franks of Arizona.

“Congress must stand with Israel to support its right to defend itself and its people from this radical group and their continued attacks on innocent civilians,” Rogers said.

Rogers said Hamas and other terrorist groups have turned Gaza into a launching pad for more than 6,000 rocket and mortar attacks against Israel since Israel’s withdrawal in late 2005. He says this recent conflict was caused by Hamas militants, and Israel would not have attacked Gaza had Hamas taken advantage of previous efforts at peace.

The Israeli Government held up their end of a six-month cease fire agreement which expired on December 19, 2008, but Hamas would not agree to another cease fire. This left the people of Israel no choice but to fight back, he said.

Rogers said, “The people of Israel are right in their acts of self-defense. Hamas is the cause of pain and suffering not only in Israel, but in Gaza where they are positioned. We must support Israel’s right to respond to the terrorist attacks. Doing nothing would only cause long-term damage to Israel’s security.”

The House passed a similar resolution today, H. Res. 34, by a vote of 390 to 5 with 22 voting present. (*Press Release, January 9, 2009*)

“Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about the devastating situation in Gaza.

Each of us in this Chamber knows what it's like to deal with a terrorist attack on our soil and against our people. Over the last several years, the Israeli people have been constantly bombarded by terrorist attacks on their soil and against their people. Since Israel withdrew from Gaza in late 2005, more than 6,000 rocket and mortar attacks from Hamas and other terrorist groups were fired into their territory.

The Government of Israel has a right and a responsibility to defend and protect its people. To stand idly by while hundreds of bombs explode on Israeli territory would have indeed been an irresponsible position for Israel's government to take, and continuing to do nothing could cause long-term detrimental implications to Israel's security in the region.

So Madam Speaker, critics who have said that Israel responded to Hamas in a disproportionate or indiscriminate way are wrong. Madam Speaker, I ask, what amount of force would have been necessary to stop the brutal attacks, to put an end to the terrorists' rocket launching pad in Gaza?

Hamas has repeatedly targeted school yards and hospitals filled with children and civilians in Israel. And the militants have been deliberate in operating from places where Gazan civilians have sought shelter, jeopardizing innocent lives in Gaza. Only Hamas is responsible for the massacre of the people in Gaza. Hamas is responsible for this conflict.

Today marks the 12th day of this conflict, and I think we all hope for a cease-fire to take place soon. However, even if the parties can reach an agreement to a cease-fire, it remains to be seen whether it will be durable.

Therefore, I strongly urge support for Israel's right to self-defense and its efforts to protect itself militarily. I also urge the United Nations and our European allies to do the same.”
(*Congressional Record*, January 7, 2009)

(WASHINGTON, DC)— Congressman Mike Rogers said today Israel has a right to defend itself against the continuing bombing of innocent Israeli civilians by the terrorist group Hamas in the Gaza strip near southern Israel.

Rogers, a member of the Armed Services Committee, said since Israel's full withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, Hamas and other terrorist groups have turned the area into a launching pad for more than 6,000 rocket and mortar attacks against Israel instead of seizing the historic opportunity to build a better life for the people of Gaza. News reports have shown many of these rocket and mortar attacks against Israel were targeted at innocent civilians, including schools and hospitals.

“We must all remember that all free and democratic nations across the world are engaged in a war on terrorism. Hamas is no different than Al-Qaeda, Hezbollah or any other ruthless terrorist organization. It seeks to terrorize free people by killing and traumatizing innocents,” Rogers added.

Rogers said Israel is fighting a terrorist group that is relentlessly attacking its people, and for Israel to do anything less than fully defending itself militarily would be completely irresponsible. Inaction, Rogers said, could cause long-term detrimental implications to Israel's security in the region.

“I wholeheartedly support Israel's right to self defense and its efforts to eliminate the Hamas terrorist and rocket launching sites in the Gaza strip through their military offensive. I urge the United Nations and our European counterparts to do the same,” Rogers concluded. (*Press Release*, January 5, 2009)

Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA)

“Madam Speaker, today we are saddened by the loss of innocent lives in Gaza; people being killed and wounded, bodies of children torn apart, all of this is a horror story. If we are serious about ending this tragedy we must be brutally honest, and not give in to ignoring hard truths. In this case the hard truth is that the real blame for this carnage in Gaza is traced to actions taken by Hamas, radical Islamists, and those who supply them with rockets and other weapons.

There was a tremendous opportunity for peace when Israel withdrew its troops from Gaza in 2005. Instead of moving forward and building a Palestinian homeland, irreconcilables have launched nearly 7,000 rockets and mortar rounds into Israel since Israeli troops left.

The hate-filled radicals who launched missiles into Israel --Hamas triggermen, not Israeli pilots--are the ones who are really responsible for the horrible mayhem we are witnessing in Gaza. The radical Islamists ruthlessly and without any remorse did what they knew would bring retaliation and result in the slaughter of their own people. The hatred of Israel in the hearts of these Hamas radicals clearly outweighs their commitment to the safety and well being of their own people. That's a hard fact. And that after shooting rockets into Israel, they hide among and behind non-combatants--women, and children--makes their actions even more despicable.

An honest assessment leads to the conclusion that Hamas doesn't want peace with Israel and has no desire for a two state solution. Hamas wants a war that will destroy Israel . This commitment is the real cause of the current bloodshed in Gaza. Once Israel left Gaza, Hamas should have used its resources, their money, our money, on health care, education, roads and economic development in Gaza. Instead they have chosen death and destruction.

Recently China's representative to the U.N. Security Council voiced concern about, “large-scale Israeli air attacks against Gaza.” Now, that takeschutzpah! Many of the rockets fired into Israel “were manufactured in China. These Chinese rockets were smuggled into Gaza after the Sinai border wall was blown up by Hamas in January.” Making matters worse the State Department and the White House hasn't mentioned a word about the China connection to the turmoil in Gaza, just as they're mum about Chinese complicity in crimes elsewhere.

Yes, the bloodshed is horrible, and yes, Israel is doing what any other sovereign nation would do. It is protecting its people by retaliation when attacked. Those who shoot rockets into Israel know there will be retaliation, thus they are the responsible party for the bloodshed we are now witnessing. It's the hard truth we can't ignore if we are to someday end this terrible heart-wrenching violence.” (*Congressional Record, January 8, 2009*)

Former Governor Mitt Romney (R-MA)

“Hamas was very clearly not a government intent on helping their people. When sovereignty was give on the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, they didn't build roads, they didn't build hospitals, they didn't build schools or businesses. Instead, they bought rockets, millions and millions of dollars worth of rockets. They were intent on destroying Israel. And in a circumstance like that, Israel has no choice but to take military action. They're taking it now. It's terribly unfortunate. But the cause of this is the constant attack over the last several years by Hamas.” (*Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer, January 4, 2009*)

Rep. Tom Rooney (R-FL)

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Tom Rooney (FL-16) released the following statement regarding Israel and its recent military operations in Gaza:

“Thousands of Hamas rockets and mortars have indiscriminately targeted Israeli civilians since Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005. Israel has the unequivocal right and duty to protect her civilians from terrorist attacks.

Israel targets terrorists attacking Israeli civilians, while Hamas hides among civilians and aims to kill as many innocent Israelis and possible. The loss of all civilian life is tragic, but there is simply no moral equivalence between the two sides.

Israel is our greatest ally in the Middle East and I fully support Israel’s right to defend herself against those who seek to destroy her.” (*Press Release, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL)

“Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Resolution 34 , recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza and reaffirming the United States's strong support for Israel.

Madam Speaker, the conflict between Israel and violent Palestinian extremist groups is not, to paraphrase former British leader Neville Chamberlain, a quarrel in a faraway country, between people of which we know nothing.

On the contrary, this conflict is one part of a broader struggle that we are all engaged in--a struggle between liberty and tyranny; between democracy and violent Islamist extremism; between those who love life and those who preach death.

It is a struggle which the United States and Israel did not seek, but which we must, nonetheless, fight and win.

On the outcome, rests our freedom, our security, and our very existence.

Today, this House sends a strong and unequivocal signal that America stands with Israel in its fight to exist.

To some of the ``high-minded" who feel comfortably removed from this struggle, such language is old-fashioned, or out of style, or undiplomatic.

In the United States, Madam Speaker, we prefer to call it the truth.

For 8 years, while Israel has sought just and lasting peace and security, Hamas and other Islamist militants have launched over 8,000 rockets from Gaza against innocents in southern Israel.

Even after Israel took the risk of withdrawing from Gaza in 2005, Hamas rejected peace and chose to use its new sanctuary to plan and carry out more attacks against the Jewish state and its people.

Six months ago, Hamas agreed to a so-called state of "calm," then proceeded to break it repeatedly by using other groups to do its dirty work and fire rockets.

Israel, a democratic state, chose to exercise remarkable restraint.

Finally, on December 19, Hamas unilaterally broke the "calm" and began launching scores of rockets into Israel.

Israel chose to protect its people and defend itself.

Hamas and its fellow violent hate-mongers do not seek a few more square miles of land. They do not seek a Palestinian state.

They seek to destroy Israel, impose an Islamist dictatorship in its place, and fight on throughout the world.

Such an outcome is unacceptable to Israel.

It is unacceptable to the United States.

It must be unacceptable to all other responsible nations--because in a compromise between good and evil, only evil benefits.

Israel has made every effort to prevent civilian casualties, and has provided significant humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians.

Meanwhile, Hamas has again committed war crimes by placing its militants and weapons, in or near schools, hospitals, private homes, and other civilian buildings.

In the real world, Hamas's use of civilians as human shields would provoke international condemnation and action to stop this menace.

But how has much of the world reacted?

Too many states, and too many officials at the United Nations, have responded by blaming Israel and only Israel.

Let us remember that in the months and years before Israel started its defensive operation on December 27, the U.N. did not make any meaningful effort to stop the relentless attacks by Hamas or diminish the threat posed by its state sponsors.

But once Israel rose to protect its citizens, the U.N. swung into action, holding four Security Council meetings in less than two weeks, including last night, when it passed a resolution--that did not even mention rocket attacks against Israeli civilians; that did not even mention

Hamas and its war crimes; and that called for an immediate ceasefire, not a sustainable ceasefire.

This Security Council resolution and other developments throughout the U.N. system, reflect the short-sightedness and bias that pervade that body.

The so-called President of the U.N. General Assembly called Israel's behavior a "monstrosity," and the Secretary-General called for an immediate cease-fire.

Sadly, they do not recognize: that only Israel would consider itself bound by such an agreement; that Hamas would continue to pursue Israel's destruction; and that such a devil's bargain without holding Hamas and its state-sponsors accountable would only embolden these Islamist extremists to intensify their destructive agenda.

The desire to stop all violence now is understandable.

We all desire peace and regret the loss of innocent lives on both sides of the conflict.

But as the ancient rabbis stated, those who are merciful to the cruel (as the U.N. has been) will end up being cruel to the merciful (in this case, Israel).

If the U.N. wants to regain its credibility, it should advance peace and security by moving to compel Hamas and their state sponsors to: immediately stop their attacks, shut down their militant infrastructure, and recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state.

Madam Speaker, we've been here before.

In 2006, the violent extremist group Hezbollah kidnapped Israeli soldiers and fired rockets relentlessly against northern Israel.

In response, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution calling for a ceasefire between Israel and the violent extremist group Hezbollah, which would supposedly strengthen the ability of a U.N. force in Lebanon to prevent Hezbollah from rearming.

In the last 2 1/2 years, Israel has held up its end of the deal, while a legitimized Hezbollah has rapidly re-armed under the U.N.'s nose and has, along with its state-sponsors Iran and Syria, increased its control in Lebanon.

As a result, U.S. interests in the region have been damaged.

If we act the same way this time, we will get the same result or worse, and we are running out of second chances. Not again, Madam Speaker.

We must support Israel's right to defend itself by rooting out the Islamist militant infrastructure in Gaza and by ending--not reducing, not postponing, but ending--the threat Hamas poses to Israel's existence; to regional stability; and to global peace and security.

Then, and only then, Madam Speaker, can a ceasefire work.

Consistent with the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act, we should also tighten U.S. and international sanctions against Hamas.

Additionally, the U.S. and our allies must seek to stop Iran and Syria from providing financial and other support to Hamas and other violent Islamist extremist groups.

The right way forward is not easy or pleasant, but upon it rests the security of Israelis, Palestinians, Americans, and all other peoples.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

“Madam Speaker, I would like to yield myself such time as I may consume. Madam Speaker, I would like to make five simple points that get to the heart of what is happening right now.

First, Israel is a democratic Jewish state that respects human rights and desires peace with its neighbors, innocent civilians, innocent Palestinians included. The jihadists in Gaza continue to terrify thousands of innocent Israelis with their attack, while Israel continues to facilitate the transfer of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Second, Hamas is a hate filled, violent, Islamic militant group that is backed by Iran and Syria regimes and seeks Israel's destruction.

Third, like any sovereign nation, Israel has the right to defend herself, her existence and to protect her citizens from attack, whether by Hamas or Hezbollah or other radical Islamists.

I have been to Sderot, and I have watched as air raid warnings forced the entire population, including children, to hide from an incoming attack.

Fourth, the actions and aims of violent Islamist extremists and their state sponsors is not just a threat to the Middle East peace and security, but to global peace and security. Today it's Hamas, tomorrow Hezbollah, the Taliban, al Qaeda, and so on.

Fifth, the U.S. and Israel are in this together. We have a saying in Spanish about close alliances that describes the U.S. and Israel friendship perfectly, we are two wings of one bird.

We depend on each other for our security and our existence. America and Israel are engaged in a broader conflict throughout the world, a struggle between liberty and tyranny, between those who love life and those who preach death. We did not seek this struggle, but we must win it.

As we stand at this important day in our living history, let us remember the consequences of inaction in the face of evil. For many years, responsible nations turned the other way, refused to accept the reality of what Israel was subjected to.

But no responsible nation could stand by and allow such attacks to continue, allow thousands and hundreds of its people to continue to live in constant fear of being murdered at any moment. No responsible nation could defer its security of its people to entrenched bureaucrats, the European Union, the United Nations, who constantly chastise Israel for taking all necessary actions to protect her own people.

Despite the U.N.'s rhetoric, there is no moral or legal equivalent between militant Islamic extremists who target civilians and a democracy that responds by targeting them. This false moral equivalence only persuades militants to persist in the unlawful action against civilians.

So, Madam Speaker, I hope that the House will carefully consider this resolution, will look at the actual language of the United Nations' resolution that points no finger at Hamas and its violent action and only points its finger at the democratic State of Israel. It's an unbalanced resolution. The United States was correct in not voting in favor of it.

Israel must not abide by it. We all want peace, but Israel wants peace with security as well.”
(*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Ros-Lehtinen Expresses Support for Israel's Response in Gaza to Escalation of Rocket Attacks by Hamas

U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, today expressed support for Israel's response in the Gaza Strip to Hamas' continued assault against Israeli civilians. Statement by Ros-Lehtinen:

"The most recent onslaught of rockets against Israel from Hamas represents a serious escalation in their war against Israel. The latest barrage of attacks by these Iranian-sponsored Islamist militants continue a pattern of indiscriminate targeting of innocent men, women and children in Israel that could not go unanswered. Israel had no choice but to defend itself.

"The response of our democratic ally, Israel, has been carefully calibrated to halt the rocket fire, aimed at surgically eliminating Hamas militants and the teams that are operating the rockets, while at the same time making every effort to limit civilian casualties in the face of Hamas' callous use of innocent Palestinians as human shields.

"We stand with the Jewish State of Israel in its ongoing efforts to protect its citizens from those who seek its destruction.” (*Press Release, December 28, 2008*)

(WASHINGTON) – U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, today commented on a forthcoming United Nations Security Council draft resolution regarding the situation in Gaza. The proposed resolution, to be introduced by the governments of Libya and Indonesia, would reportedly call for a cease-fire while making no distinction between Hamas's rocket attacks and Israel's response in self-defense. Israel is pursuing a military campaign aimed at surgically eliminating Hamas's capability to continue its offensive rocket assault, while seeking to limit civilian casualties in the face of Hamas' cowardly use of human shields. Statement by Ros-Lehtinen:

“As violent Islamist extremists in Gaza have relentlessly launched rockets to attack Israeli civilians, the UN Security Council has taken no meaningful action to stop this onslaught or condemn those Palestinian militants responsible for these assaults on Israel. Now, after the democratic Jewish State of Israel was forced to respond to protect its citizens, the Council is

moving to equate Israel's calibrated self-defense measures with Hamas's actions that threaten not just Israel but regional peace and security.

If recent history is any indication, the same UN system that has failed to hold dictators accountable and to prevent regimes like Iran from enhancing its nuclear capabilities is poised to single out Israel, yet again, for condemnation.

In the same manner that Hamas has made clear its nefarious intentions with respect to Israel and the Jewish people, so too must responsible nations send a clear message to Hamas and other Islamist extremists that such attacks as those carried out from Gaza will not be tolerated or condoned.

While Israel, the U.S. and other international donors provide humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, Hamas places Palestinians in the line of fire and uses them as human shields.

This is not the path to peace and security.

The President and the Secretary of State should act now to prevent yet another anti-Israel resolution at the UN. Other responsible nations, including our allies in Latin America and the Arab world, must join us in rejecting further biased measures that do nothing to advance peace and security." (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Rep. Steve Rothman (D-NJ)

Washington, DC- Today, Congressman Steve Rothman issued the following statement expressing support for Israel's response in the Gaza Strip to Hamas' continued rocket assault against Israeli civilians:

"I strongly support the Jewish State of Israel's right to defend itself against the endless onslaught of thousands of rocket and mortar attacks that have been fired on innocent Israeli civilians by Hamas terrorists. In fact, since Israel's voluntary departure from the Gaza Strip in September 2005, Hamas has launched more than 6,000 of these rocket attacks on Israeli towns.

"By breaking the six-month ceasefire with hundreds more of its deadly rocket attacks, Hamas has once again demonstrated it would rather pursue an agenda of bloodshed and terror than one that could result in a peaceful two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While I deeply regret the loss of civilian life on both sides, the Israeli government is absolutely justified to take action to defend their endangered citizens and bring an end to Hamas' regime of terror as quickly as possible." (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA)

"Madam Speaker, I rise to support H. Res. 34 recognizing the State of Israel's right to exist in the community of nations and reaffirming America's strong support for Israel.

Paramount among any sovereign state's rights is the right to defend itself. I voted to affirm that right for our good friend, the State of Israel against attacks from Hamas. If the Hamas-led government truly wishes to be a member of the global community, it must acknowledge and abide by all the world's rules including severing all links to terrorism and acknowledging the right of Israel's peaceful existence.

Madam Speaker, the Middle East has been plagued by chronic fighting long enough. I join my colleagues in supporting Israel and in calling on all parties to cease hostilities and focus their efforts on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.” (*Congressional Record, January 21, 2009*)

Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA)

“I would just like to quote for a minute from Hamas. They say Allah is the goal, the Prophet its model, the Quran its constitution, jihad its path, and death for the cause of Allah its most sublime belief. Now, that is the charter; that is the opening of the charter for Hamas itself. These are the words that drive these ideological jihadists. And it's an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was the Egyptian group whose ideology actually spawned al Qaeda. So Hamas, in this case, as we know, wants to replace Israel and wants to replace it with an Islamic state.

Now, Israel withdrew its soldiers and all of its settlers from Gaza in 2005, and in return Hamas came to power in the Gaza Strip. Over 6,000 rockets have been fired into southern Israel, leaving a quarter of a million Israelis just seconds away from a rocket attack. And I wonder how Americans would feel if citizens in San Diego or in Buffalo had a matter of 20 seconds to rush to a bomb shelter.

I had an opportunity in August, a year and a half ago, back when rockets like these were being fired into Haifa, to see the results of that targeting of civilian neighbors. And I was in Rambam Hospital, and indeed on that very day there were attacks on the city; 80,000 ball bearings in each one of these rockets designed to inflict maximum casualties on the civilians, and this is what Israel faces. And of course Israel has been harshly criticized for its so-called disproportionate response. But what is proportional? Should Israel fire 6,000 rockets into Gaza indiscriminately? Israel would not do that. On the contrary, it seems as though Israel has gone out of its way to even contact noncombatants who live next to the rocket launchers in advance to warn them of approaching danger.

Hamas has been deliberate in the locating of its security forces in residential neighborhoods. They put these rocket launchers in areas that are intended both to deter Israel from attacking in the first place, as well as to turn world opinion against the democratic state when it does try to silence with counter-battery fire these rockets.

Madam Speaker, no one wants to see human suffering. I would like to see this come to an end. And the longer this goes on with Hamas, the longer international attention will be taken away from the even more serious threat of Iran's nuclear program. More delays in terms of taking out Hamas only work in favor of the Islamic state over in Iran at this point, and they are helping provide the rockets.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. C.A. “Dutch” Ruppertsberger (D-MD)

(Washington, DC) – Congressman C.A. Dutch Ruppertsberger (D-MD) released the following statement on the situation in Israel.

“As a sovereign nation, Israel has the right to defend herself against the daily rocket attacks and mortar fire from Hamas-controlled Gaza. When Israel is attacked, the United States will stand by her friend and democratic ally. If our families and communities were attacked here in the United States, we would not hesitate to defend our families, our neighborhoods, our state, and our country.

“The United States is committed to working with regional allies to promote peace in the region but constant attacks from Hamas militants who use Gaza as their sanctuary will not help achieve this goal. The growing humanitarian situation must also be addressed.”

Congressman Ruppertsberger has visited Israel several times over the last few years. (*Press Release, January 6, 2009*)

Rep. John Sarbanes (D-MD)

“I support Israel’s strong response to the incessant rocket attacks from Hamas. Such attacks against innocent citizens are attacks against Israel’s very right to exist. The ongoing Gaza conflict has resulted in the tragic loss of life on both sides. Hamas must cease its campaign of terror and give Israelis and Palestinians of goodwill the opportunity to build a future of peace and security.” (*Public Statement, January 6, 2009*)

Rep. Steve Scalise (R-LA)

“A safe and stable Israel is crucial to the national interests of the United States. Our two nations face common enemies, and we must continue working together to combat these threats. In Congress we need to stand behind our Israeli friends and support their efforts to provide safety and sovereignty for their people. Israel has taken the high ground as Hamas has continued to try to strike fear into the hearts of the innocent civilians. The cowardly attacks have not only endangered the peace between Israel and the Palestinians, but have directly and deliberately put innocent civilians in the line of fire using them as human shields.

The Middle East is the major focus of U.S. military operations and it is crucial that we spread democracy and diplomacy throughout the region. As an Iranian-backed terrorist organization, Hamas is a threat not only to Israel but to the U.S. as well. In 2005, Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said, “Israel must be wiped off the map.” This way of thinking is completely unacceptable and must end.

The US must stand behind Israel as an ally and friend. No nation would allow these types of attacks to take place on their soil and Israel has taken extreme measures to not only limit casualties but to ensure the people of Gaza are provided with humanitarian assistance. I applaud the efforts of the Israeli government to promote peace in the Middle East and also support Israel’s ability and right to defend their homeland and safety of their citizens.

I strongly urge Hamas and Palestinian leadership to police their area and put a quick end to terrorist actions as they return to the table for renewed negotiations to create stabilization and normalization of life in Gaza.” (*Public Statement, January 7, 2009*)

Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL)

Washington, D.C.--U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky released the following statement today in response to the situation in Gaza.

“Given the constant rocket fire from Hamas, particularly since Hamas declared an official end to the six-month ceasefire, Israel’s response is completely understandable. For years, the children of Sderot and surrounding communities and their parents have been terrorized by these attacks and forced to live in fear, regularly huddled in bomb shelters. Now those rockets plus more sophisticated ones are coming more frequently and endangering even more Israeli communities and families.

Israel has an absolute right to defend herself. That is not in question. However, I am concerned that the renewed violence will make long-term peace and security for Israel even more elusive and create greater instability in the region.

This untenable situation is crying out for a diplomatic solution, one in which the United States plays a leadership role, calling on the international community, including nations in the region, to participate. That solution requires that the Palestinians recognize Israel’s right to exist and abandon terrorism, and that both sides agree to a two-state solution that achieves both physical and economic security. I urge the Obama Administration from its first days to re-engage in active diplomacy, not only to end the current hostilities and alleviate humanitarian suffering, but to work toward a lasting peace, one that guarantees Israel’s survival as a Jewish democratic state.” (*Press Release, January 8, 2009*)

Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA)

“Madam Speaker, the State of Israel has a right to defend its territory and its people from attack, whether that attack emanates from another sovereign nation, or, as in this case, from a terrorist organization that seized control of Gaza in a bloody putsch 18 months ago.

Hamas clearly chose to escalate its conflict against Israel by unilaterally declaring an end to the ceasefire that was implemented last June and launching a large-scale rocket attack on Israeli population centers. The Israeli government exercised great forbearance in the weeks prior to the formal breakdown of the ceasefire, which Hamas was already violating repeatedly, and had the international community more strongly condemned these attacks and taken action to stop them, the current Israeli offensive may have been unnecessary. But, Hamas bears ultimate responsibility for provoking this attack and for putting 1.5 million Palestinians in harm's way--a fact that Arab leaders from Egypt to Saudi Arabia have noted.

Along with millions of Americans, I grieve the terrible loss of life of innocent Israelis and Palestinians. Hamas's decision to fire rockets from populated areas and Israeli strikes on those

targets have resulted in many civilian casualties, and our hearts go out to all the innocents who have suffered.

It is too early to tell if Israel's military actions will quell the threat of rocket attacks from Gaza and shut down smuggling routes from Egypt. The conflict in Lebanon proved how difficult this can be and a strong international effort will be necessary to avoid a recurrence of missile strikes in both theaters. This will require a level of resolution thus far not demonstrated by the international community.

Israel's long-term security can only be guaranteed by a successful peace process that leads to the creation of a Palestinian state living side-by-side and in peace with Israel. President-elect Obama has committed himself to reinvigorating the search for peace and it is my hope that a timely conclusion of the present hostilities will allow the new President to begin these efforts from the first days of his administration.” (*Congressional Record, January 6, 2009*)

Rep. Jean Schmidt (R-OH)

“Madam Speaker, I rise today to applaud this House for standing with our friend, the nation of Israel. Madam Speaker, Israel has a right and a duty to defend herself from the savage attacks of Hamas launched from Gaza.

The Israeli government continues to work for peace, but the relentless attacks have left her with little choice but to use military force to stop the Hamas militants hiding among innocent civilians in Gaza.

Madam Speaker, Hamas must end its attacks on the people of Israel for peace to take root; I applaud this House for its strong support of our friend Israel.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY)

“Israel, like every other nation, has a right to defend itself; I find it naïve and unrealistic that some say Israel should ‘sit down and talk’ to Hamas, a group sworn to Israel’s annihilation, that broke the recent ceasefire by flinging missiles at Israeli cities. The Palestinian people must realize that Israel is here to stay and that no amount of violence, which Hamas seeks to undertake, will change that fact.” (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Rep. Allyson Schwartz (D-PA)

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Allyson Schwartz released the following statement today concerning the situation in Gaza.

“Israel's response to the relentless rocket attacks from Hamas is well within it's right as a sovereign nation to protect the safety and security of it's nation and her citizens. The United States will continue to stand with our friend and ally, Israel, and will work together towards a long term resolution to this ongoing conflict.” (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R-CA)

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger today issued the following statement on the violence in Gaza and around the world:

“This past year, we have seen far too much violence throughout the world, from the continued genocide of the people in southern Sudan to the horrible bombings in the city of Mumbai, to this week's violence between Hamas and Israel.

“Every nation has the right to defend itself against terrorism and cold-blooded attacks on its people. Israel is no different and is right to defend itself against the unceasing violence of rocket attacks launched by Hamas.

“The goal should be just and lasting peace not only in Gaza but throughout the world, and all sides have the choice and ability to reject violence and work toward that goal.

“My thoughts are with all of those who face senseless violence and with all Californians who are affected by conflicts throughout the world.” (*Press Release, January 2, 2009*)

Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI)

(Washington, DC) – Congress passed a resolution today in support of Israel's right to defend itself against rocket attacks from Gaza.

Menomonee Falls Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner supported the resolution, saying “Israel has been subjected to repeated rocket attacks since 2001. Despite withdrawing from Gaza in 2005, the attacks on Israel have continued, taking the lives of dozens of innocent Israelis. After years of violence against its citizens, I believe Israel was left no choice but to defend itself, and end the barbaric actions of Hamas.”

Sensenbrenner continued, “The U.S. State Department recognizes Hamas for what it is, a Foreign Terrorist Organization. A UN Resolution calling for a ceasefire effectively places blame at Israel's feet. The United States chooses instead to hold terrorists accountable for their actions.”

“Today's resolution does more than state Congress' bipartisan support for Israel's right to defend itself. It also urges resumption of the peace process in the Middle East. Lasting peace can only be achieved by two parties willing to adhere to an agreement, however. Let's hope the Palestinian people will reject Hamas' violent ways and embrace a peace process that recognizes Israel's right to exist,” Sensenbrenner concluded. (*Press Release, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Pete Sessions (R-TX)

Washington, DC – U.S. Congressman Pete Sessions today released the following statement regarding the ongoing conflict in Gaza:

"I strongly and unequivocally support the right of the State of Israel to defend itself from the terrorist attacks being launched by Hamas from the Gaza Strip.

"As our strongest ally in the region and our long-term partner against terror, Israel can rely upon my steadfast support of its efforts to combat Hamas' continued launching of rockets into Israel and its smuggling of weapons into the Gaza Strip.

"Until Hamas ends its assault, the State of Israel has my unwavering support in continuing its measured defense of its territory and people." (*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Rep. Joe Sestak (D-PA)

"Israel has the right to ensure its security as it has done in response to the unremitting rocket attacks from Gaza by Hamas. The United States must continue to support the defense of its valued ally Israel; however, we must also work much more effectively than we have in the recent past to achieve a long term diplomatic resolution to the overall Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This requires the U.S. to take a much greater leadership role in the Middle East, beginning with bringing a swift end to this ongoing conflict. Then, leading a regional effort, the United States must use this conflict's peaceful resolution as an opportunity to build a path to permanent peace in the Middle East."

"When I served in the White House as Director of Defense Policy in the Clinton Administration, I saw the value of U.S. leadership efforts to engage in diplomacy around the world, including with Israel and the Palestinians. We need to assume the mantle of leadership in that region because a safe and secure Israel is necessary not only for the people of Israel, but also for the region, the United States and its allies and friends." (*Press Release, January 2, 2009*)

Sen. Richard Shelby (R-AL)

In a statement released by his Washington office, US Sen. Richard Shelby explained the situation well. "Israel and the United States have maintained an extremely strong and beneficial alliance for more than 50 years," said Sen. Shelby. "Hamas' ongoing attacks are completely unacceptable and I firmly support Israel's right to defend itself against these acts of terror." (*Press Release, January 11, 2009*)

Rep. Brad Sherman (D-CA)

"Hamas claims to be beleaguered, but it has rejected the U.N. Security Council cease-fire resolution passed last night. Hamas has done everything it can to increase civilian casualties, including the use of human shields. Yet even U.N. estimates say that over two-thirds of the Palestinian casualties have been gun-toting militants, and, other estimates put that number at over three-quarters.

When Hamas launches rockets from a neighborhood, an Israeli sergeant has seconds to decide whether to return fire, and there's always a pundit to vilify that decision. But moral culpability for civilian casualties does not lie at the feet of sergeants. Moral culpability for the horrors of war lies with politicians who seek extreme and unjust ends, through violent means.

While Israel seeks to live in peace alongside a Palestinian state, Hamas seeks to kill or expel every Jew from the Middle East. Hamas proudly waves the banner of genocide and ethnic cleansing.

Vote for the Resolution.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

“At this point, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to focus on foreign policy and particularly the Middle East. Again, I would point out that if there are colleagues that would like me to yield them a few minutes and they happen to be on the floor, they need only get my attention.

Now, I want to commend the Bush administration for its support of Israel during this difficult period. Now, the press, as is often the case, is beating up Israel due to its lack of understanding of what is happening and how to interpret it.

First, let us remember that over the last several years Hamas has sent nearly 7,000 rockets into Israel. That's 7,000 times they have attempted murder. But the press would have you believe that those attempts at murder don't count because most of them were unsuccessful. This is absurd. The malice is demonstrated by the attempted murder, and I use the term “murder” explicitly here because every one of those rockets was fired with only one intention: kill Israeli civilians. Not a single one of those rockets was targeted at anything military. The fact that they haven't killed 7,000 Israelis does not reflect well on their morality. It may reflect poorly on their aim.

Second, and this is under-covered by the press, the United Nations has stated that roughly three-quarters of the casualties in Gaza are of terrorists-military, gun-toting, Hamas terrorists. This is a true tribute to the tactics used by Israel because Israel has done everything possible to avoid civilian casualties. Hamas has done everything possible to increase civilian casualties. Again and again, they fire rockets from the middle of schools, from the middle of hospitals, from the middle of residential neighborhoods.

I mean, these people live very close to each other. Israel actually has the Gaza phonebook. They will call a house and say, we know military supplies are being stored there, we're going to hit this house, you've got 10, 20 minutes to leave. And what happens? Hamas forces civilians up to the rooftops.

Perhaps one of the best-known examples is the highest level Hamas individual to be killed by Israel. At his home he stored rockets and Israel knew it. He announced publicly that he wanted to be a martyr and that he, himself, would be at his home. And Israel called that home and said we want to avoid civilian casualties. We have to hit that home because we know that rockets are being stored there, you have time to leave. What did this Hamas leader do? He forced and brought together his four wives and their many children and insisted that he be

allowed to die as a martyr and that as many of his family members would die as possible in order to increase civilian casualties.

Now, it is well-known that Israel is allowing trucks of supplies to get into Gaza. This is usually known by press critics who say Israel didn't allow a resupply truck in at this particular hour; they made the truck wait a couple of hours. Let us compare this to the wars we are most familiar with: World War I and World War II.

During each of those wars, Britain used its entire navy to cut off every German civilian from food imports and any other kind of import. And Germany deployed its submarines with the sole effort of depriving the British of the food imports they needed from chiefly the New World.

So, in the wars we're most familiar with, both the good and the bad side did everything possible to stop civilian supplies from getting into Germany or Britain. Compare that to an Israel that protects the trucks as they go in.

With that, I'd like to yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. *Brown*)....”

“I look forward to working with the gentleman from Georgia and thank him for his remarks.

Any discussion of the morality of war sometimes gets off on what I think is a sidelight. People always want to criticize this or that sergeant, this or that gunner; oh, you shouldn't have responded this way to rocks being thrown; oh, your attempt to return fire to a Hamas rocket site was off by 10 yards or 20 yards in the direction of a civilian location.

We have to remember, the moral responsibility for war and for the deaths of war cannot be placed at the feet of this or that sergeant making this or that decision under life-threatening conditions. The moral responsibility for war and for its casualties must be placed on politicians who seek extreme and unjust objectives through violent means.

Here's a case where Hamas has earned its designation as a terrorist organization. Not only does it use terrorist means, but what are its objectives? They are stated very clearly. They are for the death or expulsion of every Jew from the Middle East. They refuse any change in that policy. So whether it is genocide or ethnic cleansing or more likely a combination of the two, these are the objectives of Hamas, being pursued by violent means. It is obviously the fault of the politicians of Hamas who seek these objectives that must be held responsible for the resulting carnage.

We need a sustainable, permanent cease-fire, not a 2-day resupply truce to allow Hamas to bring in more rockets.

Now, I think it's clear that this is not just a conflict between Israel and Hamas. It is a conflict between the Government of Iran and the people of the United States. The fighting in Gaza has demonstrated again that the ultimate adversary of the United States and its allies in the Middle East is the Government of Iran. Hamas is a terrorist organization seeking the destruction of Israel in favor of an Islamic Palestinian State, but it is also an Iranian proxy. As such, it is part of a regional war waged by the Iranian regime against the United States and its allies.

Many Hamas weapons are made in Iran, and many top Hamas military leaders and the experts who launch the missiles into Israel were trained in Iran. Iran also provides the group with significant funding. It is unlikely that Hamas would have been able to achieve its status as the premier Palestinian terrorist organization and thus provoke this crisis without Iranian backing.

Iran-backed Hamas, like Iran-backed Hezbollah, shoots rockets at Israeli civilians from deep inside their own densely populated civilian population, knowing that when Israel acts to defend itself innocent Palestinians will be among the victims.

Through Hamas, Hezbollah and its operatives in Iraq, Iran and its government are able to stir up crises in the Middle East, thus injuring American prestige while helping to achieve that government's own aims.

We know that Iran is working hard toward the possession of a nuclear bomb. This would allow Iran to act with impunity in the future. A nuclear Iran would go from provoking this crisis to that crisis, and we would have to go face-to-face with a nuclear power, each time hoping, hoping for the same results we saw in the Cuban missile crisis--that is to say, going eyeball-to-eyeball with a hostile nuclear power hoping we always have the same result, namely, some peaceful resolution.

It only takes one crisis with a nuclear power that goes in the wrong direction to destroy an entire city or an entire country.

Furthermore, we should recognize that if the regime in Tehran ever finds itself on the verge of collapse--and many of us pray for that day--its leaders may decide to go out with a bang.

Preventing Iranian nuclear possession is critical to world peace, and we can still succeed in accomplishing that goal, but we have to act quickly. The good news is we have used only 1 percent of the tools that are available to us, and therefore we can do a lot more. The bad news is we've used only about 1 percent of the tools available to us. We have demonstrated a lack of political will to use the methods that we have to use to put pressure on the Iranian regime.

Now, President-elect Obama has a strong record of working to put pressure on the Iranian regime. He voted for the Lautenberg amendment, which would have prevented U.S. oil companies from doing business with Iran through their foreign subsidiaries. And he authored a bill that would have encouraged divestment from firms--chiefly oil companies--doing business with Iran.

He will have the ability, when he takes office, to go a long way toward increasing the price the Iranian Government pays for its stance on the nuclear issue and its support for terrorism. First, he can stop U.S. oil companies from using their overseas subsidiaries from doing business with Iran. We should also do that by legislation.

The administration can start enforcing the Iran Sanctions Act. We can demand that the World Bank stop dispersing funds to Iran in the form of concessionary loans which have not been effectively opposed by the current administration. We can deny nuclear cooperation agreements to countries that provide technologies to Iran. We can deny insurance to ships that carry cargo to Iran. And we can put economic pressure on American foreign companies

seeking to build liquefied natural gas plants in Iran and those that sell refined petroleum--chiefly gasoline--to Iran.

Now, while Iran is oil rich, it needs to import nearly half its gasoline because it lacks refinery capacity. I'm here to bring to the House's attention one recent success. The Indian press is reporting that as a result of pressure that was initiated in the Congress, a major Indian petroleum refinery is halting its business dealings with Iran. I want to thank the several of my colleagues who joined with me in sending a letter to the U.S. Import-Export Bank to demand that EX-IM not provide loans to this particular Indian refinery as long as the Indian refinery was supporting Iran and providing it with the gasoline it needs.

I look forward to being able to convince Iranian elites that they face other economic and diplomatic isolation if they continue their nuclear program and continue their support for terror, and there are many other ways that we can achieve that objective.” (*Congressional Record, January 7, 2009*)

Congressman Brad Sherman (D-CA), Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade, reinforced his support for the Israeli government's need to protect its civilians in response to continual, Hamas-sponsored rocket attacks on multiple Israeli cities.

“Hamas essentially renounced its own cease-fire effective December 19th. Hamas-backed militants have fired hundreds of rockets directly into civilian neighborhoods across south-western Israel since December 19th and over 3,500 rockets since 2005. The indiscriminate targeting of Israeli civilians has emptied streets, forcing thousands into bomb shelters.

“The Israeli response has been a series of targeted strikes against Hamas militants, aimed directly at those who are launching the attacks on Israeli civilian population centers. Humanitarian relief -- including nearly 100 truckloads of aid today -- continues to enter Gaza, and the Israeli military is taking extreme caution to limit civilian casualties.

“Gaza cannot be a safe haven for launching continuous bombardment of urban centers. We must support the right of Israel to defend itself.

“The fighting must be put in context. The goal of Israel is to live peaceably alongside a Palestinian State. The goal of Hamas is to kill or expel every Jew from the Middle East.

“Hamas does not deserve sympathy, or even a moderation in our level of condemnation, merely because its thousands of efforts to kill Israeli civilians are usually unsuccessful.

“Blame for the current carnage must be placed at the feet of Hamas and its supporters and apologists.” (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Rep. John Shimkus (R-IL)

“Israel has been faced with a barrage of rocket and mortar attacks from within Gaza for months, but those attacks escalated in December. Israel has every right to defend itself

against these attacks. Even after Israel used air strikes against specific targets within Gaza, the rocket and mortar attacks on Israel continue. A ground force seems within the rights of Israel to stop these attacks on Israel coming from within Gaza.” (*Press Release, January 5, 2009*)

Rep. Bill Shuster (R-PA)

Washington, DC - Congressman Bill Shuster, a member of the Armed Services Committee, released the following statement supporting Israel’s right to self defense against Hamas’ continued aggression in Gaza:

“Israel is beset on all sides by enemies that will settle for nothing less than the eradication of the Israeli state and her people from the earth. Article thirteen of Hamas’ own charter unequivocally states that ‘There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors.’ The rocket attacks that continue to be carried out by Hamas against innocent Israeli civilians demonstrate that the terrorists are determined to hold true to their charter regardless of what it may cost in human life or destruction of property.

Over 3,000 Hamas rockets have been launched into Israeli territory since the beginning of the year. It was Hamas, not Israel that broke the ceasefire on December 19th. I ardently support a lasting two state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and hope that a mediated and durable ceasefire can be implemented to stop the current violence. However, there is no question in my mind that as a sovereign nation, Israel has the absolute right to self defense to protect its territory and its people from harm.” (*Press Release, January 8, 2009*)

Rep. Albio Sires (D-NJ)

“As a free and democratic nation, I believe Israel has the right to defend itself and its citizens against Hamas-led rocket attacks from Gaza. Hamas did not abide by the ceasefire agreement by continuing to allow rocket attacks from Gaza, and these attacks seriously impede prospects for peace in the region. Last year I traveled to Israel and the city of Sderot where I saw fear in the eyes of children and families; the damage caused to their homes and their lives. Israel has the right to ensure their safety and security so they no longer have to live in fear. It is my hope that the international community can work to ensure a permanent cease fire respecting the territorial integrity of Israel and bring lasting peace to the region.” (*Press Release, January 8, 2009*)

Rep. Ike Skelton (D-MO)

“Madam Speaker, let me take this means to express my support for H. Res. 34. Israel, which has been our ally since President Truman recognized this country in 1948, could no longer tolerate relentless attacks on its citizens by Hamas and took military action to prevent future attacks. Israel must defend itself, as would any nation in the face of such provocation.

The United States and the international community must work to support an enduring cease fire that ends missile attacks by Hamas, prevents illegal arms and explosives from entering Gaza, and sets in motion a diplomatic solution that will allow Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace. Only when the cycle of violence in this troubled region is broken will Israelis and Palestinians be able to enjoy the peace and prosperity that people everywhere deserve.”
(*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Adrian Smith (R-NE)

“Having visited Israel, I have seen the country for what it truly is – a place of peace confronted by chaos. Israel is a sovereign, democratic nation and is a strong ally and an international partner. The peace process Palestinians and Israelis deserve is held hostage to terror. Democracy has the right to defend itself, and I stand with Israel as she protects herself from outward aggression.” (*Written Statement, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX)

(WASHINGTON) – Congressman Lamar Smith (TX-21) today issued the following statement in support of Israel:

“The sovereign nation of Israel – a democracy and our steadfast ally – is entirely justified in taking military action in the Gaza strip to defend itself from the terrorist organization Hamas, which indiscriminately targets Israeli civilians and uses innocent Palestinians as human shields.

“Hamas consistently demonstrates with actions and words that it has no desire for peace. In 2008, thousands of rockets and mortars were fired by Hamas from the Gaza Strip into communities in southern Israel. However, Israelis are not the only ones to be targeted by Hamas’ terror.

“Recently, Khaled Abu Toameh a journalist for The Jerusalem Post, who is Arab, reported that 35 members of the Palestinian Fatah Party were executed in Gaza by Hamas, while more than twice that number were shot in the legs or had their hands broken.

“In the face of such wanton terror and hatred, the United States and all civilized nations must stand with the people of Israel, as well as the innocent Palestinians, who are being exploited by Hamas and its sponsor Iran. Israel has demonstrated that it wants peace, but that can not be achieved until the terrorist attacks on its citizens cease.” (*Press Release, January 8, 2009*)

Rep. Zack Space (D-OH)

“Israel has the right to defend herself against the ongoing terrorist attacks launched from Hamas-controlled Gaza. The past use of restraint by Israel in the face of these repeated attacks has been met with heightened aggression emanating from Hamas. We all hope for a timely end to the violence and hostilities, but there will be no lasting peace in the region until the

tactics of terror are met with decisive repudiation, and Israeli citizens are assured of their safety within their own communities.” (*Press Release, January 6, 2009*)

Rep. Cliff Stearns (R-FL)

WASHINGTON, JAN. 2, 2009 – “For weeks, Palestinian extremists have launched rocket and mortar attacks against Israel from Gaza,” said Rep. Cliff Stearns (R-Fla.). “The government of Israel has an obligation to defend its citizens from Hamas attacks. It is unfortunate that Hamas continues to use civilians as a shield in launching its attacks; any loss of innocent life is a result of this cowardly tactic.” (*Press Release, January 2, 2009*)

Governor Ted Strickland (D-OH) and Lieutenant Governor Lee Fisher (D-OH)

“Israel is a valued ally and a great friend to Ohio and the nation. The people of Israel have every right to live in peace and security. After withdrawing from the Gaza strip, it is tragic that they are being subjected to continuing rocket attacks directed indiscriminately at civilian communities.

“While we deeply regret the suffering endured by innocent people everywhere, it’s important to remember that what’s happening is the result of Hamas’ acts of terror. We encourage the Israeli and Palestinian people to not be deterred by Hamas and its actions. We call on all our nation’s leaders to remain steadfast in their support for Israel and its people.” (*Joint Public Statement, January 7, 2009*)

Rep. John Sullivan (R-OK)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congressman John Sullivan issued the following statement reaffirming his support for the State of Israel, and calling on Hamas and other terrorist organizations in Palestine to immediately end the rocket and mortar attacks on Israeli population centers from Gaza.

“The recent attacks led by Hamas – a terrorist organization that refuses to recognize Israel’s right to exist –are inexcusable and must come to an immediate end. The State of Israel is one of our staunchest allies and must continue to be supported as they strive for a peaceful existence with their neighbors in the Middle East. No lasting peace can be achieved unless Hamas and other terrorist organizations in Palestine are disarmed and their ideologies taken out of the mainstream of Palestinian society.”

“Today, I was pleased to vote in support of H.Res.34, a House Resolution which recognizes Israel’s right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirms the United States’ strong support for Israel, and supports the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. (*Press Release, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Betty Sutton (D-OH)

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Congresswoman Betty Sutton (D-OH) released the following statement on the conflict between Israel and Hamas-controlled Gaza:

“Israel has the right to defend itself against terrorist attacks from Hamas-controlled Gaza. Hamas’ practice of burrowing in among the Palestinian people, using them as a shield and making their homes a battleground, is heinous and has resulted in tragic death and destruction,” said Congresswoman Sutton. “The United States must do all that it can to help advance peace between Israel and the Palestinian people, and a solution to address the humanitarian needs of innocent civilians. However, when Israel is attacked, the U. S. must stand strongly with Israel, its friend and ally.” (*Press Release, January 8, 2009*)

Rep. Ellen Tauscher (D-CA)

“Madam Speaker, I am observing the violence unfolding in the Middle East with great concern. My constituents, like many across the nation, are horrified by the loss of life that is occurring on top of several decades of strife, and yearn for a solution that would bring stability to the region. I continue to believe that the United States has a central part to play and must return to an active and engaged role as mediator between Israel and the Palestinian people.

The solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is also a regional one, and it is high time that all countries in the neighborhood play an active role in supporting a two state solution. The aspirations of the Palestinian people and of their Israeli neighbors will continue to be undermined if Iran and Syria continue to funnel support for terrorist groups who kill innocent civilians and challenge the aspirations of moderates.

Just like we in our country would and have responded to a terrorist attack on our soil, I fully support the right of Israel to defend its people against rockets launched by Hamas. Hamas has fired more than 6,300 rockets and mortars at Israeli population centers since Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005. No country can endure such actions. Hamas had an opportunity to govern the Gaza strip and work with Israel to meet the needs of the Palestinian people when Israel withdrew from Gaza in August 2005. Instead of renouncing its goal to eliminate the Israeli state and provide true leadership for the Palestinian people, Hamas chose violence and most recently broke the cease-fire which Egypt had brokered.

Fatah in the West Bank and Palestinian moderates have shown the way by growing the economy there. Moderates on both sides will find lasting solutions which must then be actively supported by our new administration, the region and our European allies. Until that time when all parties can return to the negotiating table, I urge Israel to keep its operation focused on its core goal of eliminating the military threat posed by Hamas while protecting the lives of civilians who must be Israel's partners in the future.” (*Congressional Record, January 7, 2009*)

Rep. Todd Tiahrt (R-KS)

“Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 34, a resolution recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the United States' strong support for

Israel , and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. I applaud Speaker *Pelosi* and Leader *Boehner* for bringing this resolution to the floor.

We stand in solidarity with those praying for real and lasting peace and an end to the terrorism brought upon the people of Israel . I am confident the acts of aggression carried out by those seeking the destruction of the State of Israel will not end in success. Peace will come to the land of Israel once again.

Born out of genocide and conflict, the modern State of Israel has developed into a free, democratic and prosperous country. I have been to Israel several times and I have seen how they make the desert bloom. I have witnessed their corporate compassion to take care of people in need. I have heard their pleas for peace. An unfailing ally of the United States, Israel is a beacon of freedom and religious tolerance in the Middle East.

Israel understands the dangers of terrorism all too well. From suicide bombers to thousands of incoming rockets and mortar shells, the people of Israel have experienced mass casualties of enormous and unacceptable proportions.

As Israel currently undertakes military efforts in Gaza, I stand with the Israeli Government and the Jewish community as they seek to establish peace and protect its citizens from terrorism. Hamas and radical Islam must be defeated.

No nation can sit idly by while its people are killed, its children are traumatized, and the daily life of its people is severely disrupted by terrorism. Ask yourself, would America tolerate more than 3,000 rockets launched against our homeland in just 1 year? No, we would protect our people. Israel has the responsibility to protect its citizens, as well, and that is what it is doing in on-going operations in Gaza.

Americans look forward to peace in Israel and the Middle East, but until Hamas and its terrorist allies relinquish its arms and renounce violence, the hope for peace can not be attained. Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this important resolution.”
(*Congressional Record, January 13, 2009*)

Rep. Edolphus Towns (D-NY)

“Time and again, Israel has shown tremendous restraint in the face of Hamas' continued rocket attacks on Israeli citizens. Israel has every right and duty to protect its citizens from such provocations, restore order at the Gaza border, close underground tunnels used to smuggle weaponry into Gaza, and demand for the release of Corporal Gilad Shalit.” (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Rep. Niki Tsongas (D-MA)

WASHINGTON, DC – January 7, 2009 – Congresswoman Niki Tsongas released the following statement regarding the situation in Gaza.

“Ever since Israel withdrew its forces and removed its settlements from Gaza in 2005, its citizens have been subjected to a steady bombardment of rockets launched by Hamas. As is the case with any sovereign nation, Israel has the indisputable right to defend herself and her

citizens. Absent assurances that Hamas end these terrorist acts, the United States will continue to support efforts by Israel to dismantle the Hamas terrorist infrastructure.

“I am grateful that Israeli and Palestinian officials have agreed to a brief cessation of hostilities so that humanitarian aid can reach civilians affected by the fighting in Gaza. It is my hope that this agreement will hold, will lead to a more lasting cease fire, and that innocent civilians on both sides will be spared further violence. But in order for any cease fire agreement to become permanent, Hamas must permanently end the rocket attacks which have threatened Israeli civilians for years.

“The incoming Administration must play an active and constructive role to establish a lasting peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. I support a two state solution that enables the Palestinian people to realize their aspirations of self governance while assuring Israel’s security. But such a solution will be impossible to achieve until Hamas renounces violence, accepts Israel’s right to exist, and agrees to abide by past Israeli-Palestinian accords.” (*Press Release, January 7, 2009*)

Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)

Representative Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) today released the following statement concerning the security situation in Israel:

“Hamas’ decision to end the cease-fire and launch rocket attacks at Israeli population centers is wrong and unacceptable. Israel has a right to defend herself and issued ample warnings to Hamas about the consequences of ending the cease-fire. Hamas bears responsibility for the renewal of violence and must immediately end its campaign of terror.” (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa (D-CA)

“A few moments ago, I received a briefing on the latest developments in the Middle East. And after hearing some of the details and complex issues facing both sides right now, it is safe to say that none of us here in Los Angeles can truly comprehend what life must be like in Southern Israel or the Gaza Strip.

The fear and devastation on both sides is unimaginable. And standing thousands of miles away - in a nation where we have the luxury and the privilege to demonstrate, advocate our positions, and go home at night free from terror and violence - it is vital for us to remember that no one condones the loss of innocent life.

No one doubts that each life lost to terrorism is a loss to our world.

Everyone is praying for a viable and sustainable ceasefire, for the arrival of more humanitarian aid, for a lasting peace agreement. And everyone hopes that the shooting will soon cease and the air raids will end.

I have come here today because I’ve been to Sderot and seen the wreckage caused by a

constant barrage of rocket attacks.

I've met parents afraid to let their kids play in the streets and students unable to go to school each day.

I've walked along empty roads, visited vacant buildings, and witnessed the sheer destruction of a town decimated by 8 years of missile strikes.

And after all of the attacks - after all of the failed attempts to ignite the fires of peace rather than fan the flames of terrorism - any nation would take action to protect its citizens and ensure the safety and security of its residents.

And no country would sit silently while innocent families are threatened and civilian lives are at-risk.

Israel is no different. It must act against the Hamas leaders targeting the innocent. And it must be allowed to exercise its right and responsibility to defend itself.

Make no mistake: Israel has acted in self-defense. And while some of the images on television may be disturbing, it was equally disturbing to see the fear in the eyes of the children I met in Sderot.

This is a trying time for people across Gaza and Israel.

As we speak, the tragic consequences of Hamas' actions and ideology are playing out on television screens and newspapers worldwide.

But as residents of a City as diverse and dynamic as Los Angeles, this must not be a moment to simply exercise our rights to protest and shout slogans and condemn the other side.

This is a moment to learn all of the facts and encourage dialogue, to continue reach out to those who disagree with us and join together - as Jews, Muslims, and Christians...as Arabs, Israelis, and Americans - in a prayer for an end to hostilities; for security; for a halt to violence; for a return to the negotiating table; and for the beginning of a new era of peace and security for all of the children and families of the Middle East." (*Prepared remarks, January 6, 2009*)

Sen. David Vitter (R-LA)

"Since Israel withdrew from Gaza in August 2005, Hamas has fired approximately more than 6,000 rockets at Israeli civilians from Gaza - reportedly killing 10 and wounding more than 700.

"Earlier this year, Israel agreed to a six-month cease-fire with Hamas. All during this time, Palestinians could have been working toward setting up a stable economy and society for the region, but instead have used the area as a base for missile launching and terror.

“What would Americans do if Mexico was firing rockets into southern California? President-elect Obama commented at one point during his campaign that he could not sit idle if somebody was sending rockets into his house where his family slept at night. He said he would do everything to stop that, and would expect Israel to do the same thing. I couldn't agree more,” said Vitter.

Vitter is a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. (*Press Release, January 5, 2009*)

Sen. George Voinovich (R-OH)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator George V. Voinovich (R-OH), a member of the Foreign Relations Committee and staunch supporter of Israel, today issued the following statement:

“I am deeply troubled by the continued terrorist attacks on Israel. I had an opportunity to see firsthand the devastating impact of such attacks during my visit to Sderot last year. I go to places like Sderot to see things with my own eyes because I believe many of us become desensitized to what is going on after seeing it day after day in the media. I strongly believe that Israel has a right to defend herself against such attacks. The Palestinian people must understand that improved humanitarian conditions in Gaza depend on an Israel free from Hamas terrorist attacks. Hamas is the problem – not the Palestinian people. And I believe the reaction from Arab governments in the region show that Israel is right in defending herself from these attacks.” (*Press Release, January 6, 2009*)

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL)

“Madam Speaker, I am proud to be a cosponsor of this essential Resolution, recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the United States' strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

As Israel faces intense international criticism for exercising its legitimate right to self-defense, southern Israel is being repeatedly and consistently showered with Hamas rockets and northern Israel has been hit by rockets from Lebanon.

Like all sovereign nations, Israel has not only a right, but moreover, an obligation, to ensure the safety and security of her citizens.

Let me be very clear. Israel's response, her defense of her people, is in reaction to the hundreds of Hamas missiles that were targeted at Israeli citizens throughout the flimsy ceasefire of 2008.

Hamas's leaders, choosing terror against Israel over the welfare of the Palestinian people, have chosen violence over peace.

And while Hamas has been going out of its way to kill innocent Israelis, Israel has been going above and beyond--even putting itself at risk--to protect innocent Palestinians.

Specifically, Israel drops leaflets and makes phone calls to targeted Palestinian areas to warn citizens they are in danger, even if this means losing the element of surprise and putting the lives of its own soldiers at risk.

In contrast, Hamas deliberately attacks Israeli civilians and uses its own people as human shields.

In addition, Israel has been facilitating the transfer of significant amounts of humanitarian supplies to the Gaza Strip; delivering 15,000 tons of aid over the past week and a half.

Hamas, on the other hand, has stolen some of those humanitarian medical supplies from civilians to give to their gunmen.

Undeniably, the suffering is great in Israel and Gaza. Now is the time for us all to stand together in support of Israel and peace. I urge my colleagues to support this critical resolution, and pray that Hamas stops firing rockets into Israel, and starts working towards peace instead of terror.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL-20) released the following statement on the developing situation in Gaza:

“Over the past few days, it has pained me to hear the unfair and unjust criticism of Israel as she strives to protect her citizens from Hamas's attacks. Israel, like all sovereign nations, has not only a right, but moreover, an obligation to ensure the safety and security of her citizens. We would not allow our government to stand idly by as hundreds of rockets and mortars came crashing down on the heads of our citizens, and we cannot expect Israel to stand idly by either. There is no one to blame for the escalation of violence but Hamas. Hamas's unprovoked attacks on Israel must stop. All parties must work swiftly toward a renewal of the truce, and ultimately, peace.” (*Press Release, December 29, 2008*)

Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA)

“Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 34 , a resolution that expresses solidarity with Israel in its efforts to defend itself from Hamas. The resolution also calls on the President to work for a durable and sustainable ceasefire, stresses the need to address the humanitarian situation in Gaza and emphasizes the importance of protecting innocent civilians to the maximum extent possible.

The Hamas leadership has held the Palestinian people hostage to its terrorist aspirations. Peace negotiations have been stalled by its bloody coup against Fatah and Gaza is now in shambles because of its relentless rocket fire against Israel. If Israel is unable to stop Hamas from rearming again, hope will continue to fade for achieving an enduring two state solution with a democratic Jewish Israeli state living beside a viable, independent and democratic Palestinian state.

In the summer of 2005 Israel disengaged from Gaza entirely, unilaterally removing settlements and military installations at a great financial and political cost. One year later Israel went to war with Hezbollah, despite the Israeli Army's complete disengagement from Southern Lebanon six years earlier.

The Israeli people face a grim reality that Hamas and Hezbollah seek their destruction despite Israel's overtures of peace and tranquility. Although that does not mean Israel will not continue to take risks for peace, it is imperative that Israel and the United States continue to take all measures necessary to fight these terrorists and safeguard Israel's security.”
(*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

“Israel’s operation in Gaza is an act of self defense. It is a blatant double standard for those who criticize Israel to expect any nation to stand idle as its cities and citizens are indiscriminately shelled with thousands of mortars and rockets.

Hamas has abused its perch in Gaza to serve only its own terrorist ambitions. Instead of building roads, Hamas constructed tunnels to smuggle missiles and weapons. Instead of building hospitals, Hamas embedded its rocket launchers, ammunition depots and supply routes to maximize risk for civilian populations.

Those of us who embrace the hope for a two state solution recognize that Israel must succeed in stopping Hamas and delegitimizing its tactics. If Israel cannot prevail, it would be a huge setback for the prospect of peace and reconciliation. It would be hard to imagine Israel agreeing to a Palestinian state on the West Bank if it could become a staging ground for missile attacks on major population centers.” (*Press Release, January 7, 2009*)

Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-NY)

“Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, we are now into our 19th day of the war of defense on the part of the Israelis in the territory called the Gaza Strip, and there has been enormous amount of coverage in this 24-hour news environment that we are in. And yet there has been a great many questions that have been raised about the origin of this conflict, how it might end, and whether or not it is indeed necessary at all.

And the simple information that--to allow the public to understand this is that for the course of years, we have had a circumstance where residents in one small corner abutting the Nation of Israel --not part of Israel , not occupied by Israel , but the Gaza Strip--has been lobbying missiles, rockets, day-by-day, hour-by-hour, into their neighbors' territory killing people, injuring people, and terrorizing people. And it's gone on for a very long time.

Despite the notion that sometimes we pay attention to these circumstances, only every so often for the residents of small communities who have been the recipients of these rockets, this has been a terrorizing period of years. In fact, there have been thousands of rockets that have gone from the Gaza Strip and fallen in Israel over the course of the last several years.

Now, just so it's completely clear, the Gaza Strip is not occupied territory by any definition any more. The Israeli Government unilaterally decided after efforts had broken down to

negotiate some type of a two-state solution, the Israeli Government and Israeli citizens said, "You know what? We don't want to be in Gaza at all any more. We're leaving. We don't want to be in West Bank at all any more. We're leaving," and let the Palestinians in the territories essentially with what they wanted.

It wasn't the perfect outcome. It wasn't the outcome that the Israelis really wanted going in, and it was, frankly, probably an imperfect solution. But since that time in 2005, the territories have been under the control of the Palestinian people.

Now, the Palestinian people have made some decisions under a democracy that was remarkably well set up, and despite all of the concerns, the Palestinians have indeed made their choice about what they want. And what they did is they chose to have Hamas represent them in the Gaza Strip, and they chose to have Fatah represent them in the West Bank.

Well, in some ways, we now have the outcome that was almost preordained by that choice. Hamas, you see, is an organization that is not dedicated to improving the lives of Palestinians, is not dedicated to a two-state solution. They are dedicated to the destruction of Israel. And to many degrees, when they were elected as representatives of the people via a relatively free election in Gaza, they campaigned on a platform of saying, "You know what we're going to do? We're going to be a constant, violent thorn in the side of our neighbors in Israel."

And to some degree, what they did is exactly what they said they would do. Almost as soon as they got into office, they began using Gaza to launch weapons into their neighbors' backyard.

Now, throughout this entire time, you might believe that, well, if the Israelis or if any country--heck, let's make it the United States. If we had even one rocket fall from Canada, or if we had one rocket fall from Mexico, or if the residents of New Jersey had one rocket fall from New York--even one--it would be reasonable to expect that the recipients of that violence would react. Actually that hasn't happened.

Now, I shouldn't say there has been no reaction. There has been some outcry on the part of the Israeli people. The Israelis have gone to the United Nations and asked for help and asked for relief. The Israelis have pleaded to the Arab world--and this map shows some of the neighbors here. Says, "See what you can do to help us with this problem?"

And this is not a fabrication. In fact, this is the pile of shrapnel of the rockets that had landed, the Katyusha rockets just in one town of Sderot. This is not something that's the subject of overblown rhetoric. You can actually see these landing and see, unfortunately, the havoc that they have brought with them.

So the question then becomes what does a country do?

Well, first thing that Israel did was they made their best efforts to get Hamas to stop in nonviolent ways. But that didn't bear much fruit. Then they tried appealing to the international community to rally around Fatah, who is the--who occupies and controls the West Bank. That didn't seem to work. And finally, over the course of time, it got worse and worse and worse.

For all of the discussion about whether or not Israel has overreacted to the attacks--this is a graphic visualization of attacks by Hamas before the war. This number here in 2008, this is

before the war began. Look at this. Starting in 2005--I guess it was October of 2005--and Congressman *Berkley*, and she knows these facts better than I, October of 2005, elections happened, internationally supervised elections, and the Palestinians in Gaza choose Hamas to be their representatives.

For anyone to say after that moment that much is a surprise would be wrong. Hamas campaigned on a reign of violence against Israel, and to their credit, if that's the word for it, they carried it out.

You can see from this 946 rockets fell on Israel; 783 rockets fell on Israel in 2007. And this is the number--and I want to point this out. This has nothing to do with what might have happened recently. This is what happened in 2008. Even considering the fact that for a good portion of this 2008 there was a cease-fire that Israel agreed to engage in and Hamas agreed to engage in, and of course that was broken by Hamas when they started dropping rockets again.

So I guess the question then becomes--and I ask any critics of Israel how they would answer this question--What do you do when it's your job to protect your citizens? It's the ultimate authority of any government is to protect its citizens from violence. What do you do when this type of violence takes place?

But the question goes beyond whether or not Israel is within its right to defend itself. I think that's almost beyond dispute. But it does go to the responsibility of the other nations in that area.

Now, many people have asked how could it be that this tiny piece of land in Gaza, how could it be that they could even have thousands upon thousands of rockets to launch anywhere? Well, the answer lies in its neighbor, Egypt.

Egypt, through this very tiny passageway through the Sinai Desert, has permitted tunnels to be dug for thousands upon thousands of rockets to be brought in to the Gaza Strip.

Egypt, the second largest recipient of our tax dollars in foreign aid. Only Israel gets more; it's about the same amount. Since the Camp David Accords, we, the taxpayers of the United States, have about \$3 billion a year in aid going to Egypt. Egypt is the place that many of these weapons are coming from into Gaza. Largely speaking, the area along the western border is Egypt's control and Egypt's supervision.

Then you've got to ask, well, what is Jordan doing? Many people have said, "Well, why is it that the West Bank exists? Why isn't it part of Jordan's control? Who are the refugees refugees from?" Well, you go back historically, where they came from is Jordan. And Jordan has said, "We don't want them."

For all of this talk about the new Arab World and all of the protests about who it is that should help out with the Palestinian problem, right now the only reason that they're the Israeli's responsibility is because Jordan has said, "We don't want any part of these people."

And where is it that Hamas is headquartered? Why is it that we read reports today that the citizens of Gaza are saying, "We're okay. We would like to try to figure out a way to resolve this peacefully"? Well, the problem is Hamas leaders are in Damascus. They are nowhere near

the action. Because Syria, just as they did in the War of the Rockets in 2006, provide harbor for the Lebanese attackers--for the Hezbollah attackers in Israel , Hamas has its leadership in Damascus; and they're saying, ``Go ahead. Blow up more Palestinian homes. Blow up more of the Palestinian territories."

So then you've got Saudi Arabia. Well, Saudi Arabia is even worse than perhaps the other ones because what they're doing is pumping out more and more and more money for the terrorists at both sides of Israel . They want to continue the conflict as long as they can. Why? Well, if you were Saudi Arabia and you were the royal family and you had denied your citizens rights and you were like a monarchy constantly teetering on your point, you'd want any distraction possible. So they continued to fund the homicide bombers; they continued to fund the terrorists.

So when you hear the protests from the Arab League, when you hear the protests from our feckless friends at the United Nations, the question should be, ``Why aren't you helping in some constructive way?"

Israel has, over the course of time and time and again going back all the way to 1947 where Israel agreed to the United Nations' original partition plan, said, ``We'll take half this amount of land so long as we can live in peace." The Arabs said, ``No."

The Wye River Accord. The Palestinians said no, the Israelis said yes.

All throughout the history of Israel , it has been Israel saying, ``We will do anything necessary to allow us to live in peace."

And the very reason that rockets are falling now on their citizens is because they said, "We're going to give the West Bank, give the Gaza to the Palestinians. You govern it as you see fit." How have they seen fit? They've given aid and comfort to an organization that every day is making war against Israel .

Now there's one other thing that's come up--and it is indeed a horrible tragedy--that there are innocent victims in this. If you are a child going to school, whether it be in Ramallah, whether it be in Gaza, whether it be in Sderot, whether it be in Tel Aviv, whether it be in Minneapolis, or Brooklyn, if you're a child, you've done nothing wrong; you don't deserve to be a victim of anything. You hold no political views. You are a victim.

But in this case the question has to be asked, Who are you a victim of? If you are living in Gaza and Hamas is launching weapons from the back of a school, if they're launching weapons from someone's apartment building, if they're launching weapons from a public park and Israel responds, and unfortunately innocents get harmed, who was it that injured them?

And I would argue, ladies and gentlemen, that what you've seen here is a systematic effort by those that are launching these rockets to take harbor in people's homes, in schools, and in places like that. They've essentially created a whole country of human shields.

So then we return to the question, What is a country to do? What is Israel to do in this circumstance? And I think most of us would say, who think about the idea of our neighbors

launching weapons upon us, that you've got to stop them at some point. You've got to say enough is enough.

Now, looking at it historically--and this may sound almost ironic--the solution to the conflict in the Middle East is remarkably easy. At the end of the day, there are some thorny historical issues, but Israel has said, "If it's about land, we will give you the land that you desire." And at Camp David II that led to the second Intifada, it began because Israel said "yes" to 98 percent of what the Palestinians had asked for at the negotiating table.

If it's about who controls Jerusalem, if it's about the borders and where in Gaza to provide checkpoints, none of these things have the Israelis said they're not prepared to discuss, even though some of us from afar feel very strongly that the eternal, undivided, historic capital is Jerusalem. And I think that an argument can be made that only Israel has shown that they really do care about protecting that capital. And it does have a historic place in Jewish life that simply does not hold in Muslim life.

But all of that being said, every one of these issues can be discussed and compromised on, provided Israel's neighbors say we're going to stop trying to blow you up. Even the Government of Israel has said even things like the Golan Heights along the border of Syria--and Syria, by the way, is our single greatest problem remaining in Iraq. These are not friends of the United States. Saudi Arabia is the country that funded Osama bin Laden. Syria is the one who has created a refugee crisis in Iraq and has allowed fighters to come in and kill our citizens. In Lebanon, a country that if it were left to its own devices could have a very bright future ahead just as it had a bright past so long as it's not occupied by Hezbollah. Egypt, which entered into peace with Israel, and despite all of its shortcomings there is a peace treaty that exists today. So why is it this doesn't happen? And that needs to be the question that American citizens ask as they watch the reports, why is it that you have a situation where you have people bombing day after day?

Now, I think that the plight of the Palestinians is a tragedy, but they have become international pawns of these Arab states that seek the destruction of Israel. If the sentence becomes, " Hamas agrees Israel has a right to exist side by side and in peace with the West Bank and with Gaza as neighbors as part of a Palestinian state," if that becomes the predicate for a discussion, there can be peace by the end of this year. There are deals to be done; I know it because Israel has offered them. But when you have a situation that the moment you have any kind of a democracy, the result of the democracy--which, again, began in--the Israelis left the territories here in 2005. This is what a democratic country has decided to do with their democratic freedoms. If you have this, you leave Israel with no choice except to defend herself.

And let me just make one point because a couple of my colleagues are here and I want to yield to them because they've been leaders on this issue as well. You know, who do you get to help with this? Who are you going to call? Well, theoretically you should call the United Nations. The United Nations should be the place that says, you know what? This is just unfair, it's just not right. There is no reason that you should have a pile of missiles at the end of the day piled up at your town hall as it is in Sderot in Israel.

But let's look at the United Nations. The United Nations has passed 15 resolutions against Israel this session. They've done 22 of them that were just one-sided resolutions. The General

Assembly has passed 15 resolutions. And since 2006, there have been 22 of them. Just recently, in fact, they passed a resolution calling for a cease-fire in the Gaza conflict. That's fine. That's fine. But it said that Israel should stop its attacks to try to knock out the rockets, but it said nothing about Hamas stopping its attacks. So essentially it said go back to that chart that I just showed you where more and more rockets land.

Now, I have to tell you, it was a bad day for the United Nations, but I'll be very frank, it was a bad day for the United States as well, because rather than voting no on that resolution, the United States abstained. And I'm a Democrat through and through. President Bush has largely been a very good President for Israel . He's had some weak spots. He provided unseemly amounts of funding for the Saudi Arabians, but by and large has stopped these bad resolutions from passing unanimously like this one does. So it was a bad day for the United States as well.

But it's important to note that while all of this is going on, the United Nations--in my hometown and Congresswoman *Maloney's* hometown of New York--has not used its power to try to implore the Arab states in the region to be helpful. Instead, what they've done is resolution after resolution condemning Israel for defending itself.

Now, I welcome a conversation about some other option that Israel has. Maybe it's another few more years of this. Maybe Israel should wait until this gets to 10,000 or 20,000. There has to be a point on this chart where any person would say, okay, that's enough, you can now respond. Well, I believe after 3,000 rockets landing upon its neighbors, that that point has been reached.” (*Congressional Record, January 14, 2009*)

“Israel has a right to defend itself. No nation can be expected to abide a barrage of rockets falling on its citizens. In recent days Hamas had used Gaza as a staging ground for an air attack on its neighbor. It had to stop. Israel's actions today were justified.” (*Press Release, December 30, 2008*)

Rep. Robert Wexler (D-FL)

“Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution which expresses Congress' unwavering support for Israel and its unequivocal right to self-defense in the face of an ongoing campaign of terror perpetrated by Hamas.

The world must know that America stands shoulder-to-shoulder with Israel in its ongoing struggle for security and peace. All of us wish to see a stable, secure, and peaceful Middle East, and we mourn for the loss of innocent lives. But it is unconscionable to expect the Israeli Government or any government to sit idly by as deadly rockets rain down on its cities.

The world must recognize how we came upon the deadly circumstances that exist in Gaza now. It was Hamas, not Israel, that abrogated the so-called truce by firing rockets into Israel. Instead of using violence to achieve its destructive goals, Hamas must adhere to the international principles established by the Quartet.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this resolution and support Israel's right to self-defense so that we can move toward a more peaceful Middle East. But peace comes with strength and resolve; it does not come by avoiding the unfortunate circumstances that Hamas, not Israel, has placed this region in once again.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

(Washington, DC) Congressman Robert Wexler (D-FL), a senior member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee in the United States Congress, released the following statement regarding the government of Israel’s ongoing military efforts in the Gaza strip. Wexler supports the government of Israel’s efforts to prevent Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other Palestinian terrorist organizations from launching rockets and mortars into Israel. Over 4,000 Qassam rockets and mortars have been launched by Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations into Southern Israel since the government of Israel’s disengagement from Gaza in 2005.

“I strongly support Israel’s right to self-defense in response to the continuous deadly rocket and mortar attacks launched by Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations into Israel. Americans stand shoulder to shoulder with the Israeli people during this difficult time and strongly condemn Hamas’ perpetrated terrorism,” said Wexler. “Instead of using violence and extremism to achieve its destructive goals, Hamas must adhere to the international principles established by the Quartet, including ending terrorism, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations.”

“I am deeply disappointed by the statements of some international leaders who are quick to chastise Israel and unwilling to condemn lethal Hamas rocket and mortar attacks. It is unconscionable for anyone to expect that the Israeli government or any other government for that matter, to sit idly as thousands of deadly rockets rain down on their cities and threaten the well-being and security of their citizens. I urge the international community to join the United States in denouncing the daily terrorist acts carried out by Hamas and support Israel’s right to self-defense and security.” (*Press Release, December 29, 2008*)

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI)

Newport, R.I. - U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) issued the following statement on the conflict in Gaza:

“Hamas has cast aside a cease-fire agreement brokered by the Egyptians and indiscriminately targeted Israeli civilians with a barrage of rockets and mortars, dragging the Israeli and Palestinian peoples back into the crossfire of war and leaving Israel with little choice but to respond with force. Israel must defend its people against these attacks.

“Now, like all Americans, I hope for strong diplomatic intervention that will bring these hostilities to an end and facilitate humanitarian assistance to those suffering in and around Gaza. I regret that the Bush Administration's years of neglect allowed the peace process to deteriorate so gravely, and I'm confident that President-Elect Obama's Administration will bring a new commitment and new leadership to address the wider conflict in the Middle East.” (*Press Release, January 4, 2009*)

Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC)

“Mr. Speaker, America's ally Israel remains under constant and frequent attack by Hamas. Noted columnist Charles Krauthammer recently revealed in a column in The Greenville News that Hamas has cruelly launched 6,464 rockets into Israel in the last 3 years. No other country has endured such attacks.

Now Israel has chosen to defend itself by going after the Hamas terrorists. The loss of life is terrible, but it is Hamas that bears the responsibility. I saw firsthand, while visiting Israel this summer, that Hamas has fired rockets against civilians in Israel .

A peaceful relationship between Israel and Palestine is in the best interest of both nations. It will only be accomplished if Hamas agrees to stop firing rockets targeting civilians.”
(*Congressional Record, January 8, 2009*)

WASHINGTON – Congressman Joe Wilson (SC-02) issued the following statement in response to the ongoing situation in Gaza.

“This troubling situation in Gaza is yet another reminder of the dangerous circumstances the people of Israel face while Hamas continues to kill innocent civilians through indiscriminate rocket attacks. Israel has not only the right but the obligation to protect its citizenry, and I hope the international community will recognize and support their acts of self-defense.”
(*Press Release, December 31, 2008*)

Rep. C.W. Bill Young (R-FL)

“Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Resolution 34 , which reaffirms our Nation's strong unwavering support for Israel and its right to defend itself against missile attacks from Gaza.

As an ardent supporter of Israel and its fight against terrorism, I am well aware of the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and am monitoring developments closely.

As any nation, Israel has every right to protect itself from terrorist attacks within its borders and across its borders to ensure the safety of its citizens from the threat of terrorism. As a sovereign nation, Israel has the right to defend itself just as our Nation and any of our allies would.

Throughout the past year, Hamas has launched an estimated 3,000 rockets into Israel and during that time the range of these rockets has increased striking further and further into Israel. The ultimate goal is peace, security and prosperity for the people of this troubled region, but there can be no peace when terrorists attack the Israeli people.

Israel is carefully targeting the Hamas leadership and its rocket launching capability, but as long as Hamas hides and operates within civilian locations there will be civilian casualties.

That is regrettable, but as long as Hamas launches rockets into Israel, there will also be civilian casualties there.

Our Nation will continue to respond to terrorist attacks and threats on our Nation and our people and I would not expect the Israeli government to react any differently to these ongoing threats.

Madam Speaker, Israel remains our staunchest friend and ally in Middle East and we stand together with them as they endure this most recent assault against their freedom and liberty.” (*Congressional Record, January 9, 2009*)

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Our nation will continue to respond to terrorist attacks and threats on our nation and our people and I would not expect the Israeli government to react any differently to these ongoing threats.

Israel remains our staunchest friend and ally in Middle East and we stand together with them as they endure this most recent assault against their freedom and liberty.” (*Public Statement, January 7, 2009*)

Rep. Don Young (R-AK)

Washington, D.C. – Alaskan Congressman Don Young voted today in favor of H.Res.34, Recognizing Israel’s right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the United States’ strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

“Like any man, woman, child, or country, Israel has the right to defend itself and its people,” said Rep. Young. “Israel, like the United States, is a freedom-loving country, and it’s a shame that other nations feel threatened by that. Israel is our friend, and we must stand by it and

support it. By passing this Resolution, we condemn the evil actions of Hamas and support freedom for the people of this country, of Israel, and for all those who seek it.” (*Press Release, January 9, 2009*)