

## CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS COMMEMORATE ISRAEL'S 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

### **Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD), House Majority Leader**

Madam Speaker, it is fitting today that Members on both sides of the aisle join to recognize the founding of our nation's steadfast friend and ally, the State of Israel; to reconfirm the special bond that exists between our two nations; and to reiterate that the support for Israel in this Congress is bipartisan, overwhelming and stronger than ever.

On May 14, 1948 – the day on which the British Mandate for Palestine expired – the people of Israel proclaimed the sovereign and independent State of Israel.

And, 11 minutes later, the United States – at the direction of President Truman – recognized the establishment of this new state.

President Truman observed: '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, over the ensuing six decades it has become increasingly clear that Israel's success is not only a strategic imperative for the United States, but a moral imperative, as well.

Ours is a relationship of principle and conscience, of shared values and common aspirations, of peace and opportunity, and of a mutual commitment to freedom and democracy.

The United States and Israel are nations of immigrants.

We are safe havens for the oppressed.

We are partners for peace.

And, we are united in fighting terrorism.

No people on earth have been subjected to more bigotry and violence than the Jewish people.

And, no people are more in need of a sovereign, secure homeland to provide safe haven and to protect identity.

David Ben-Gurion once remarked: The security of Israel 'is a question of the survival not only of the people of Israel, but of the Jewish people the world over.'

Throughout the last 60 years, Israel has been an island of freedom in a sea of despair. It has been vilified, threatened and attacked. And yet, it has prevailed and prospered – just as it will prevail and prosper today, tomorrow and in the future.

When we talk of Israel, we inevitably acknowledge her courage in the face of those who seek her destruction.

But let us also acknowledge that over the last 60 years, the Israeli people have established a vibrant, pluralistic, democratic political system that includes freedom of speech, association and religion; a vigorous, free press; free, fair and open elections; the rule of law and an independent judiciary.

Furthermore, Israel has developed an advanced, entrepreneurial economy and is among the world leaders in the high-tech industry.

Madam Speaker, over the last five years, I have had the privilege of traveling with Congressional delegations on tours of Israel three times. And, what the Members saw was a reflection of themselves: People who love their country; people who want to live in peace and freedom; and people who want their children to have even greater opportunities.

As our allies in Israel celebrate their 60th anniversary of independence, let us honor their determination to fulfill the vision of Zionism's founding father, Theodor Herzl, who observed, 'If you will it, it is no dream.'

Through courage and will, Israel was born and the dream of generations was made real – and it will endure.

I want to congratulate the citizens of Israel and the entire Jewish community on this important anniversary of Israel's founding.